MARVEL

023

A CLONE CONSPIRACY TIE-IN

The AMAZING SPIDER-MAN®

SLOTT • GAGE • CAMUNCOLI • KEITH

WHEN PETER PARKER WAS BITTEN BY A RADIOACTIVE SPIDER, HE GAINED THE PROPORTIONAL SPEED, STRENGTH, AND AGILITY OF A SPIDER; ADHESIVE FINGERTIPS AND TOES; AND THE UNIQUE PRECOGNITIVE AWARENESS OF DANGER CALLED "SPIDER-SENSE"! AFTER LEARNING THAT WITH GREAT POWER THERE MUST ALSO COME GREAT RESPONSIBILITY, HE BECAME THE CRIME-FIGHTING SUPER HERO CALLED...

The AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

WARNING! THE EVENTS OF THIS STORY TAKE PLACE AFTER THE REVELATIONS OF ***THE CLONE CONSPIRACY #4!*** IF YOU HAVEN'T READ IT, PROCEED AT YOUR OWN RISK!

MILES WARREN, THE JACKAL, A MASTER GENETICIST SPECIALIZING IN CLONING, HAS HARBORED A LIFETIME OBSESSION WITH PETER PARKER, AND HAS USED HIS TECHNOLOGY TO WREAK HAVOC UPON HIM.

NOW, THE JACKAL HAS RESURFACED AS THE HEAD OF NEW U, A PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY PROMISING MEDICAL MIRACLES...WHILE ACTUALLY SWAPPING OUT TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS FOR HEALTHIER CLONES.

PETER WENT TO CONFRONT THE JACKAL, BUT FOUND MORE THAN HE'D BARGAINED FOR. THE MAN BEHIND THE MASK WAS NOT MILES WARREN, BUT PETER'S OWN CLONE, BEN REILLY, ALIVE AGAIN. IN AN ATTEMPT TO GET HIM ON BOARD, BEN BROUGHT BACK EVERYONE IN PETER'S LIFE WHO HAS DIED–INCLUDING HIS FIRST LOVE, GWEN STACY...

"THE MOMENT YOU KNOW"

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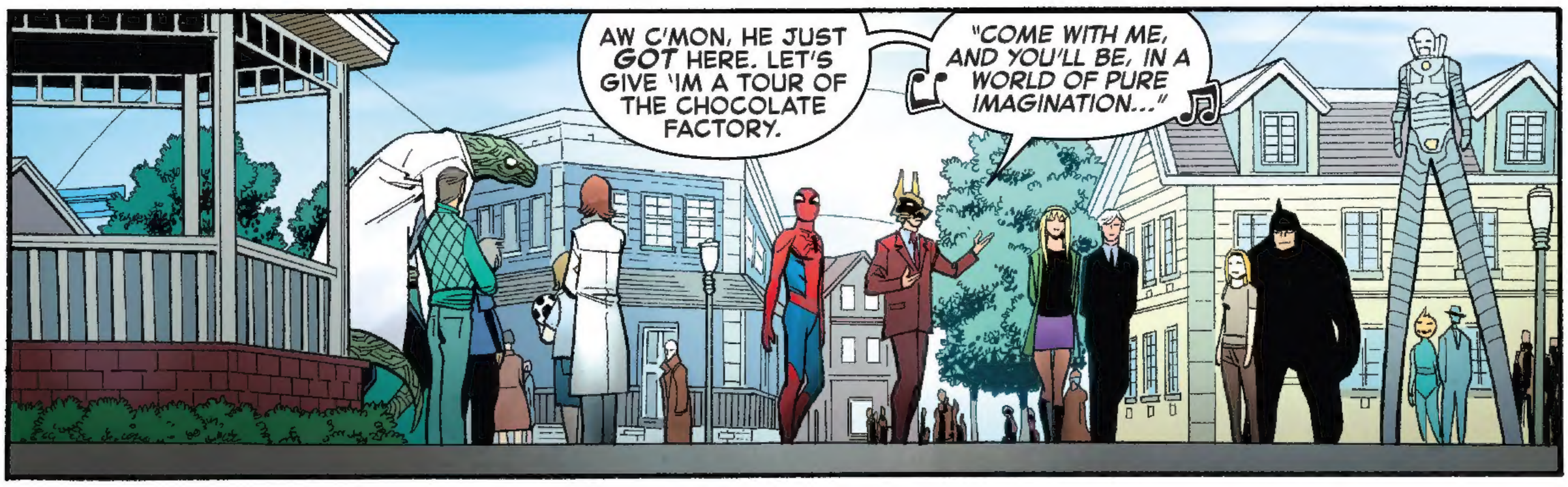
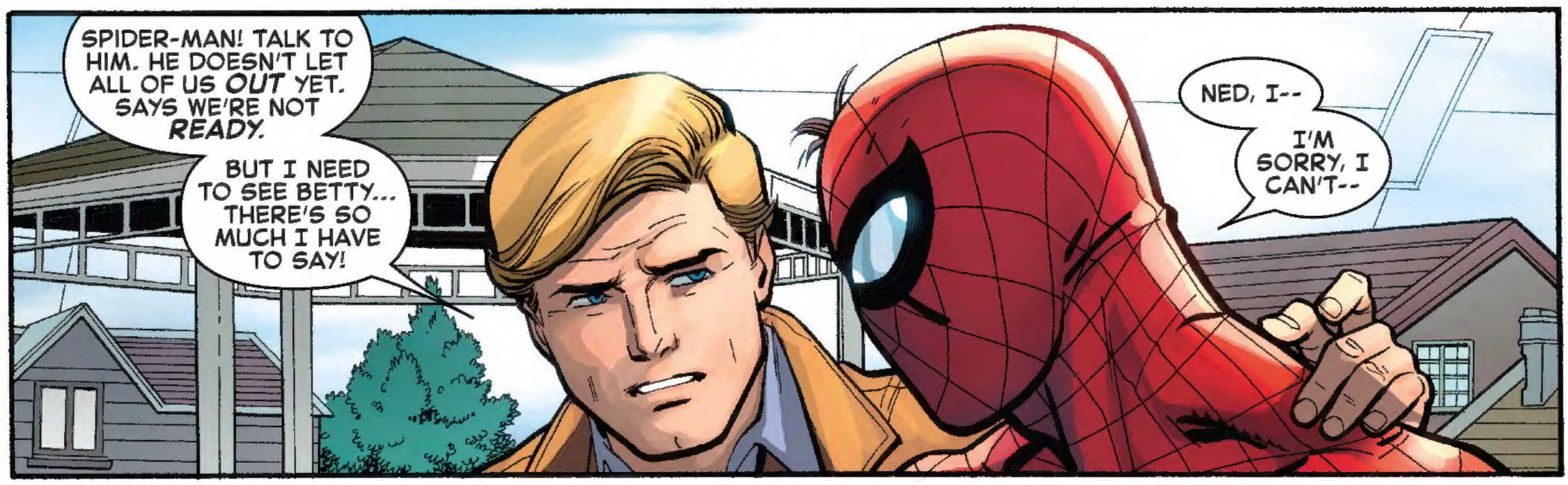
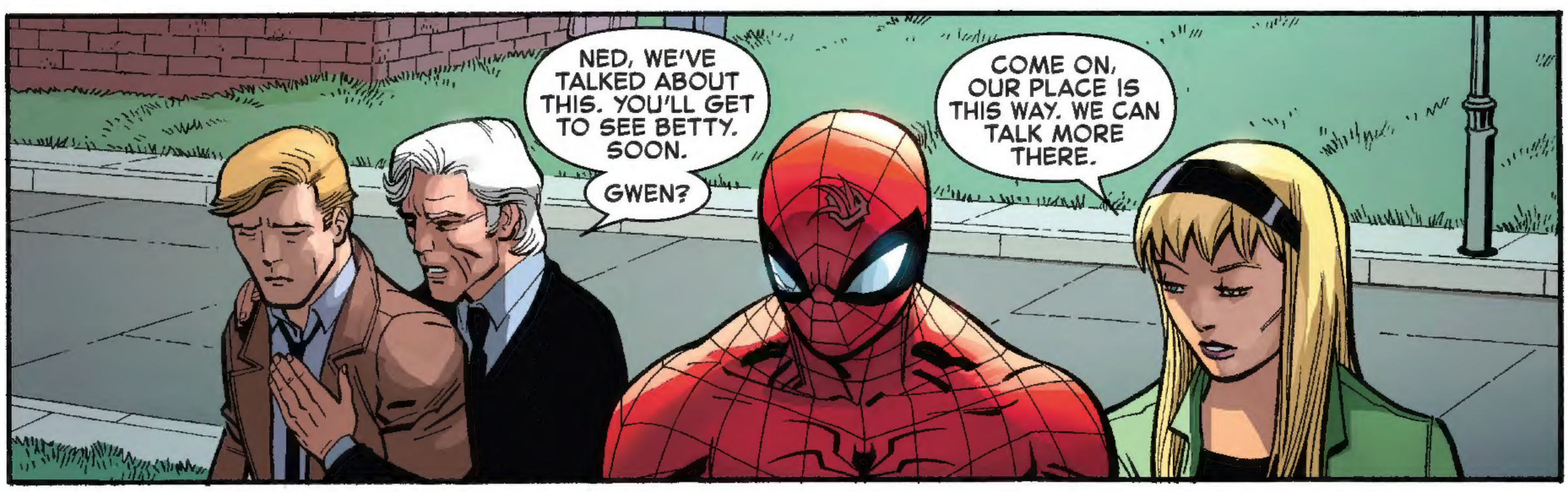
I FORGIVE YOU.
GWEN...
NOW PLEASE, HELP US.

TH-THIS...
THIS ISN'T--
REALLY HAPPENING? OF COURSE IT IS. EVERYTHING YOU NEVER KNEW YOU WANTED. AND MORE.
ALL THE PEOPLE CLOSE TO YOU WHO DIED-- EVERYONE YOU COULDN'T SAVE. THEY'RE BACK. ALIVE. AND HAPPY. LOOK!
HE CAN SEE IT. HE JUST DOESN'T BELIEVE IT'S REAL.
THAT I'M REAL.
THAT ANY OF US ARE.
AND IF HE DOESN'T BELIEVE THAT...
...HE'LL NEVER BE A PART OF IT. IT'S OVER, WARREN.


AW C'MON, HE JUST GOT HERE. LET'S GIVE 'IM A TOUR OF THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY.
"COME WITH ME, AND YOU'LL BE, IN A WORLD OF PURE IMAGINATION..."

TOO SOON? IF IT HELPS, WE'RE BRINGING GENE WILDER BACK NEXT WEDNESDAY.
I-I'M USED TO THE BAD GUYS COMING BACK. BUT THAT'S SALLY AVRIL, AND NATHAN LUBENSKY.
FRIENDS, LOVED ONES... THEY NEVER COME BACK. IT'S...
IT'S WRONG...


SPIDER-MAN! TALK TO HIM. HE DOESN'T LET ALL OF US OUT YET. SAYS WE'RE NOT READY.
BUT I NEED TO SEE BETTY... THERE'S SO MUCH I HAVE TO SAY!
NED, I--
I'M SORRY, I CAN'T--

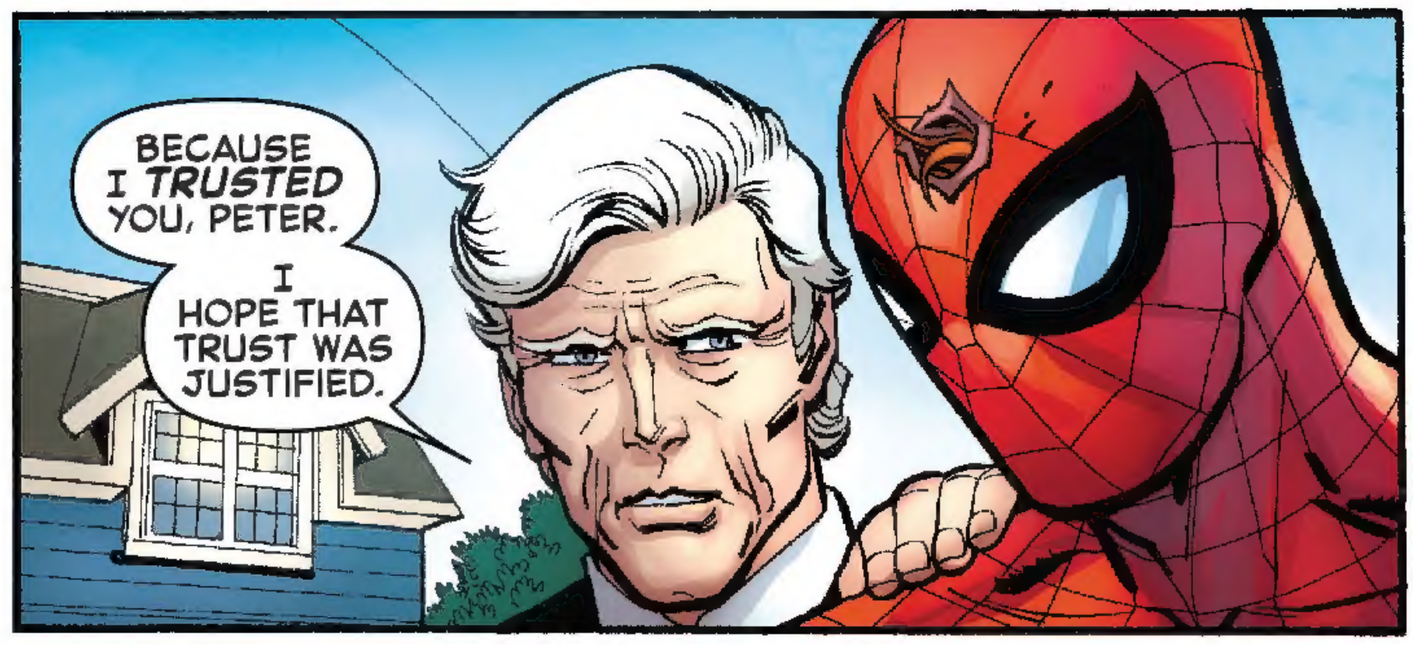

NED, WE'VE TALKED ABOUT THIS. YOU'LL GET TO SEE BETTY. SOON.
GWEN?
COME ON, OUR PLACE IS THIS WAY. WE CAN TALK MORE THERE.

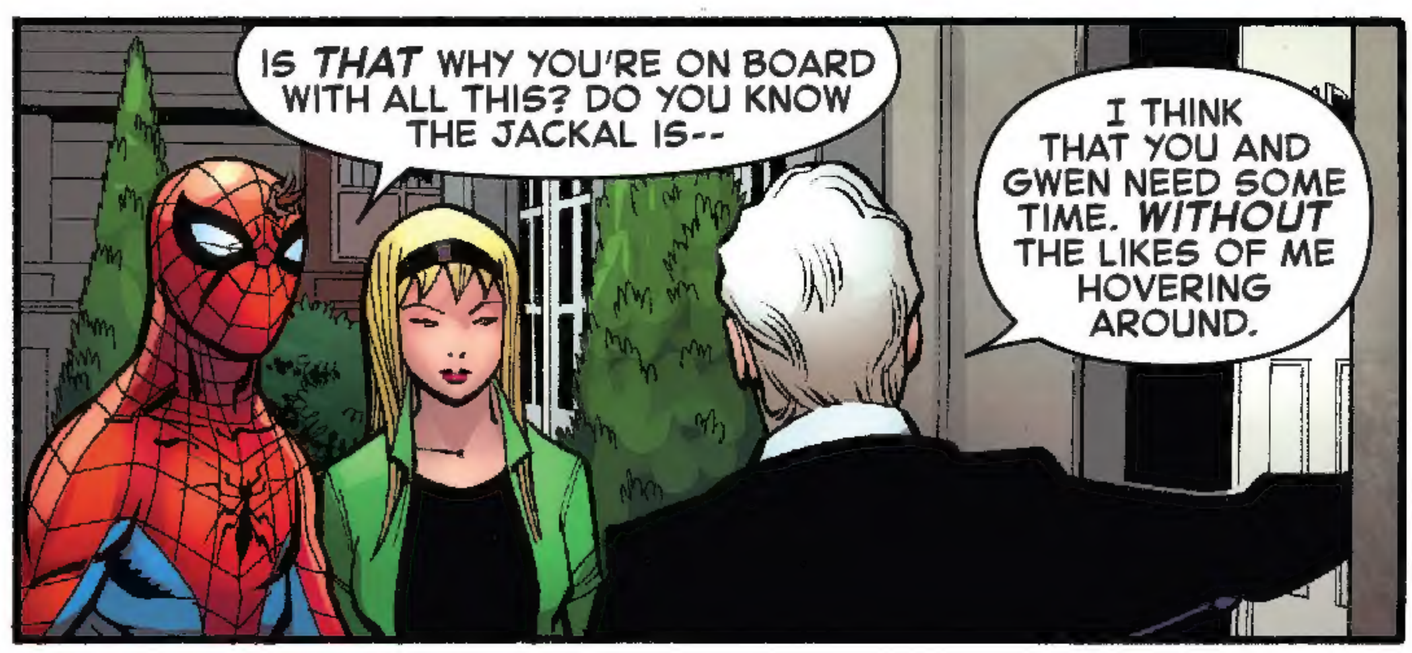
GOOD IDEA. YOU GUYS GO. CHAT. BOND. I'LL BE OVER HERE...

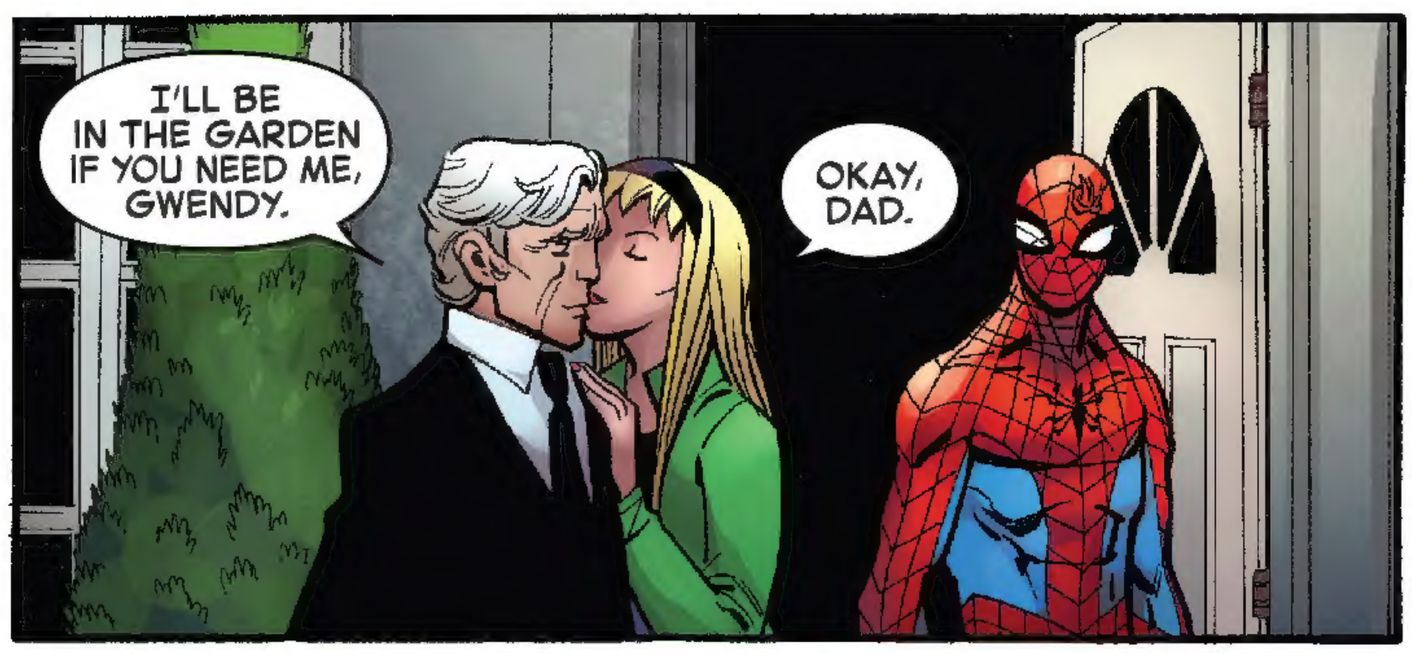
HOW DO YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE YOU'RE "YOU"? ALL THIS-- THE SECRECY? THE GRAVE-ROBBING?

A BY-THE-BOOK GUY LIKE GEORGE STACY WOULD NEVER GO ALONG WITH THAT.

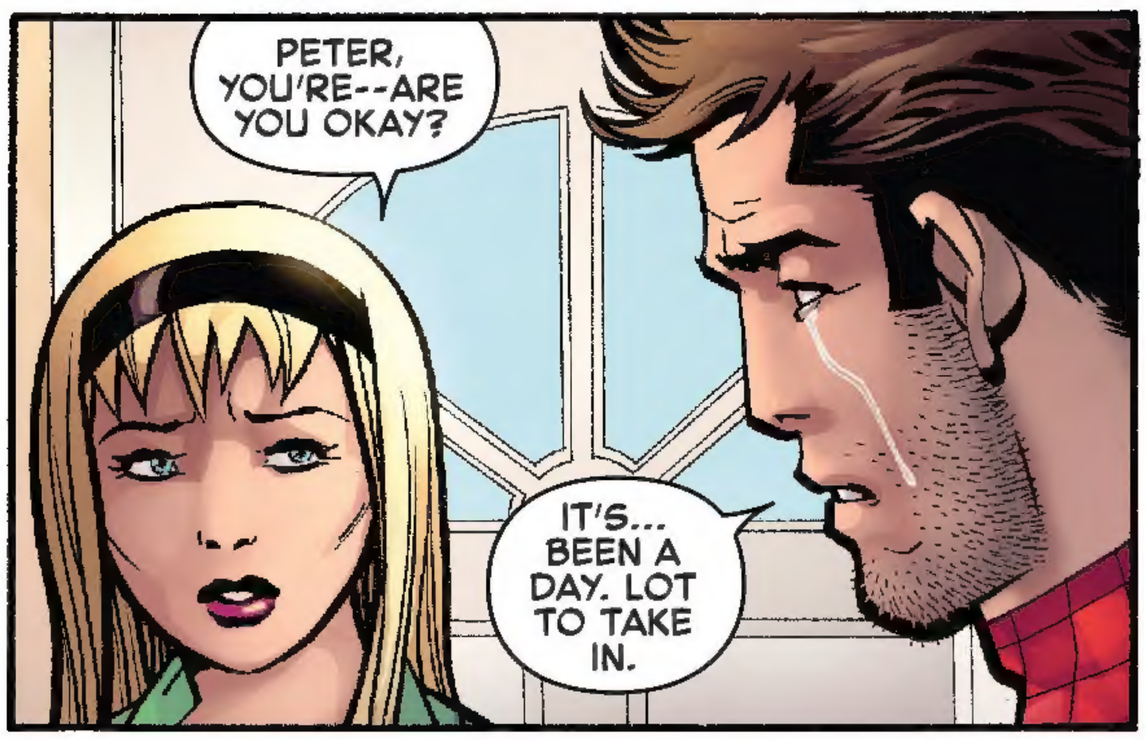
"BY-THE-BOOK"? *ME?* I BENT THE RULES *ALL THE TIME...*

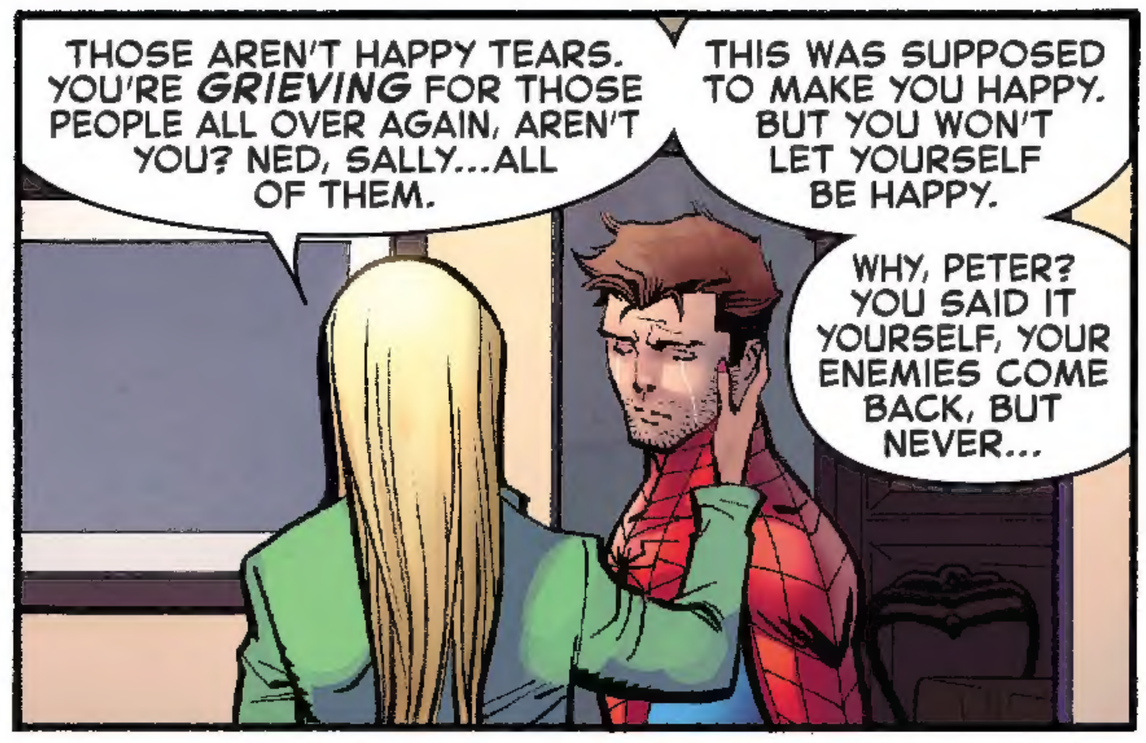


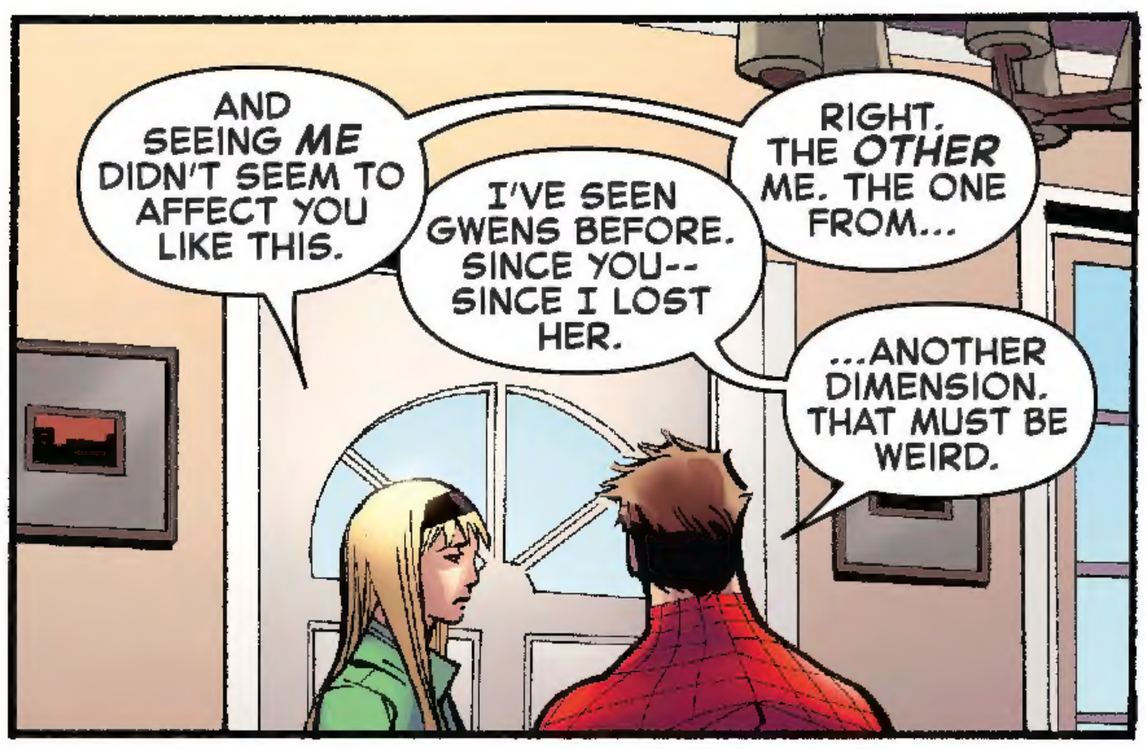


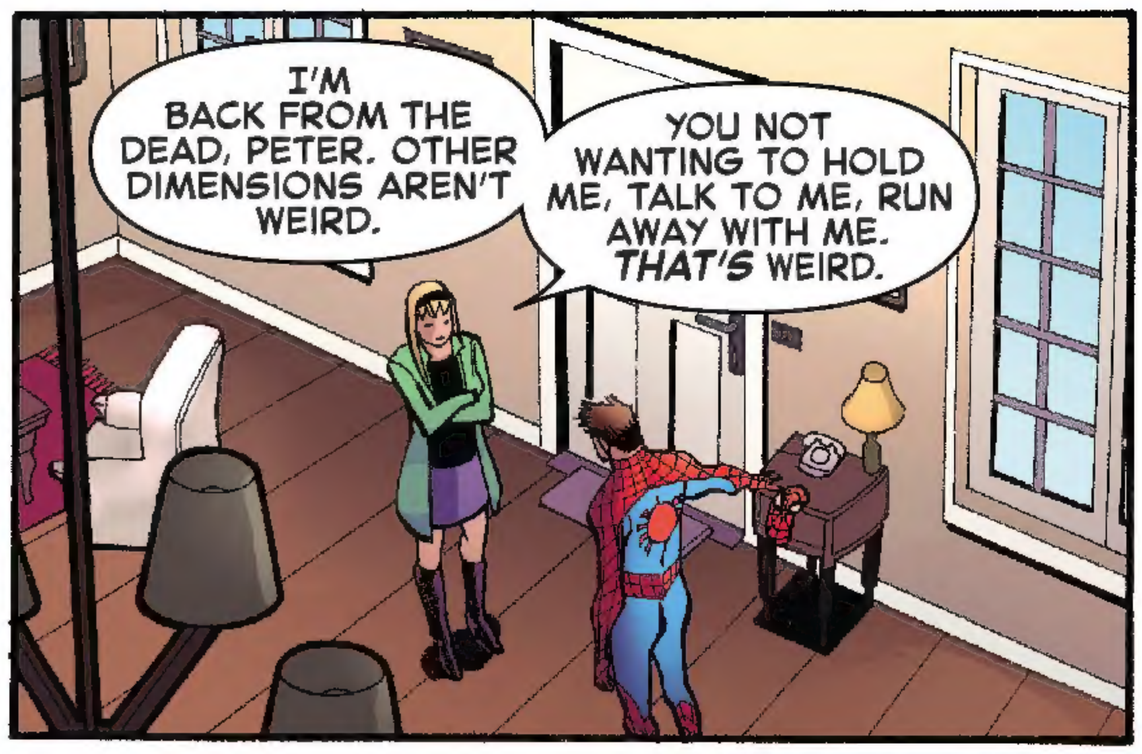


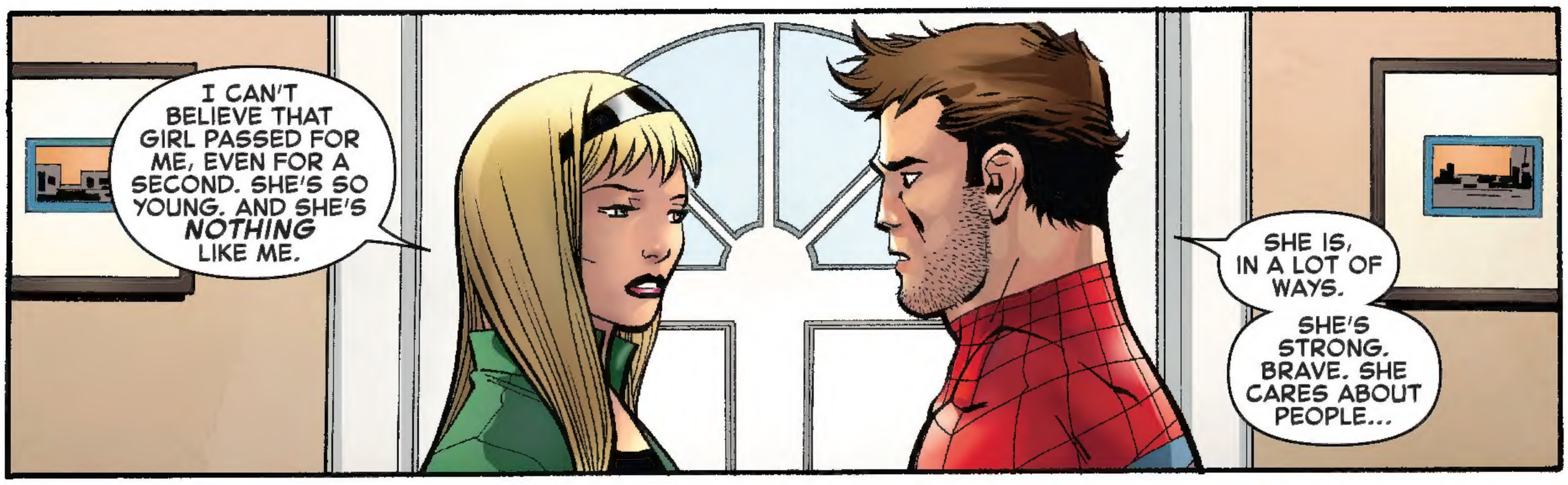
IT'S JUST US NOW. YOU CAN--

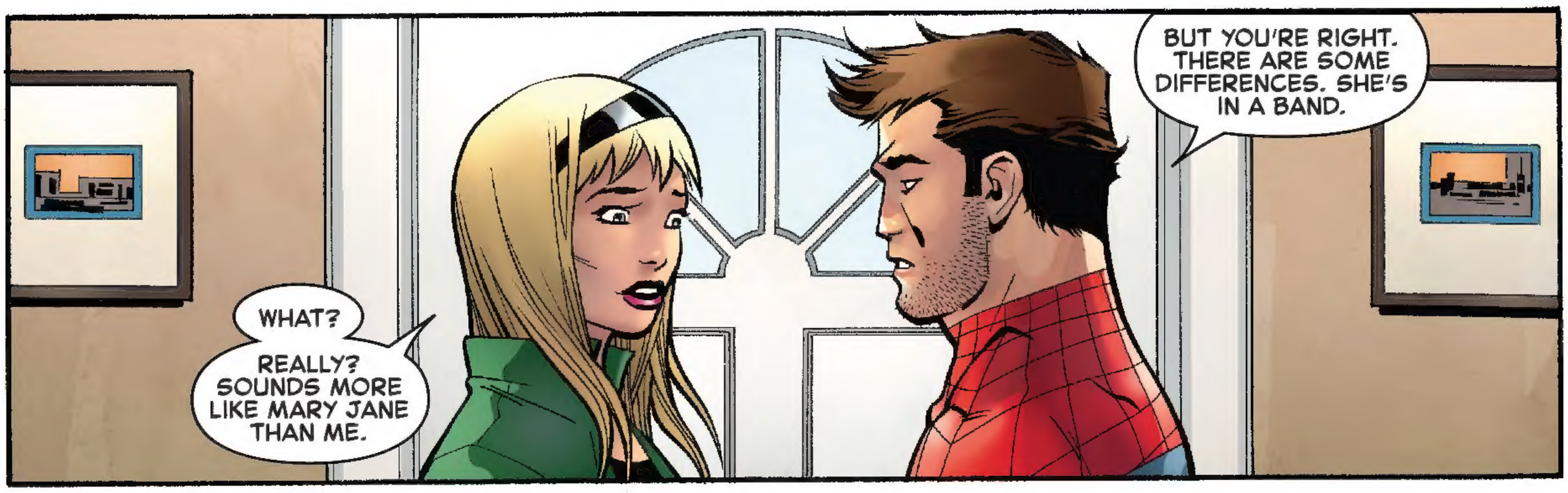


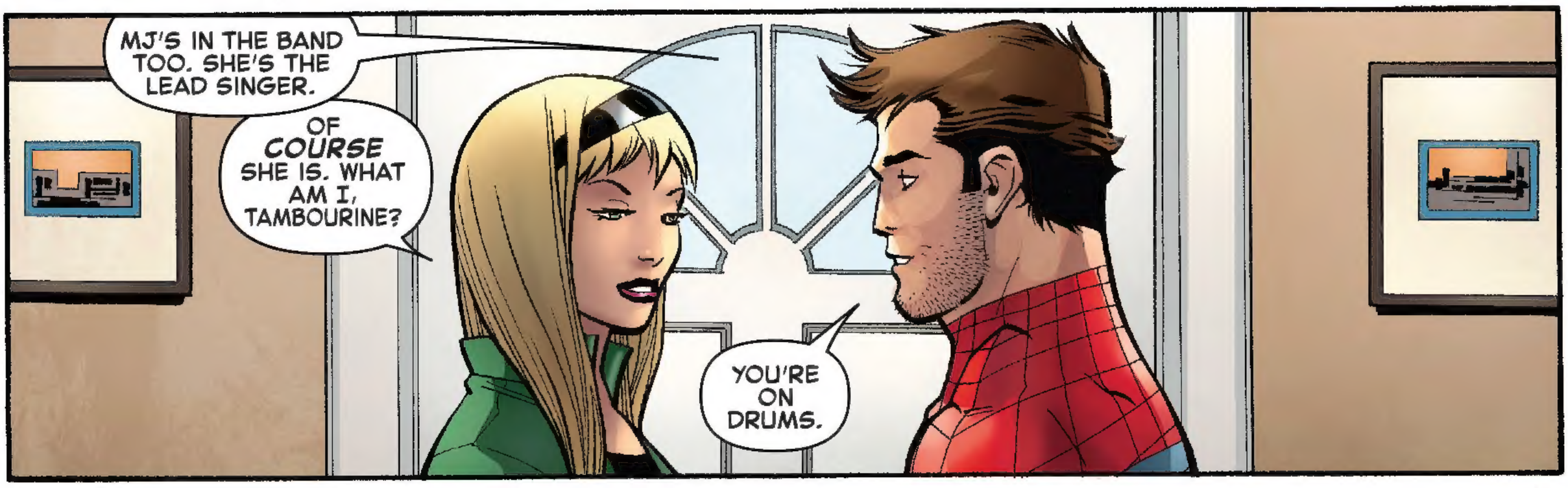


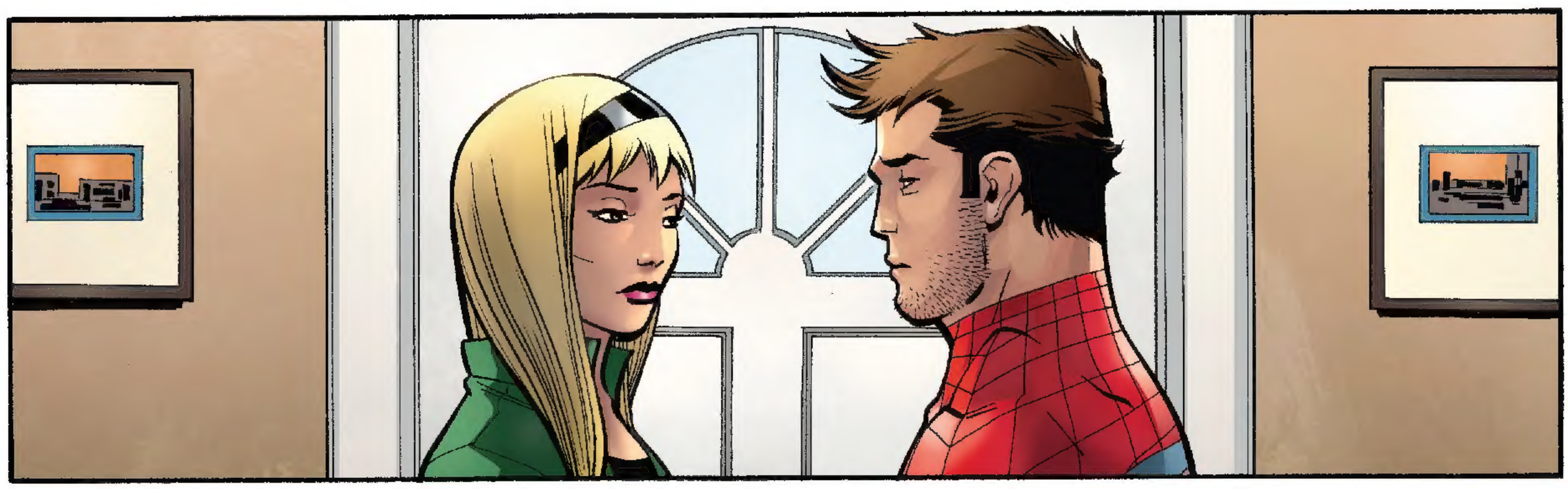


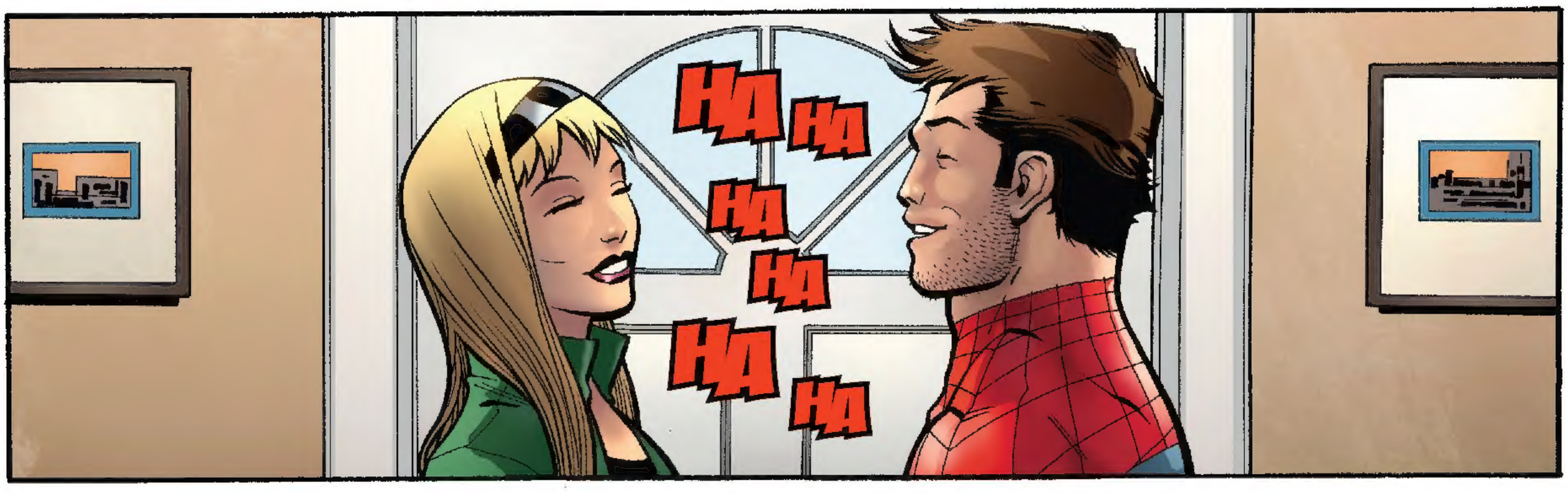



I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT GIRL PASSED FOR ME, EVEN FOR A SECOND. SHE'S SO YOUNG. AND SHE'S *NOTHING* LIKE ME.
SHE IS, IN A LOT OF WAYS.
SHE'S STRONG. BRAVE. SHE CARES ABOUT PEOPLE...

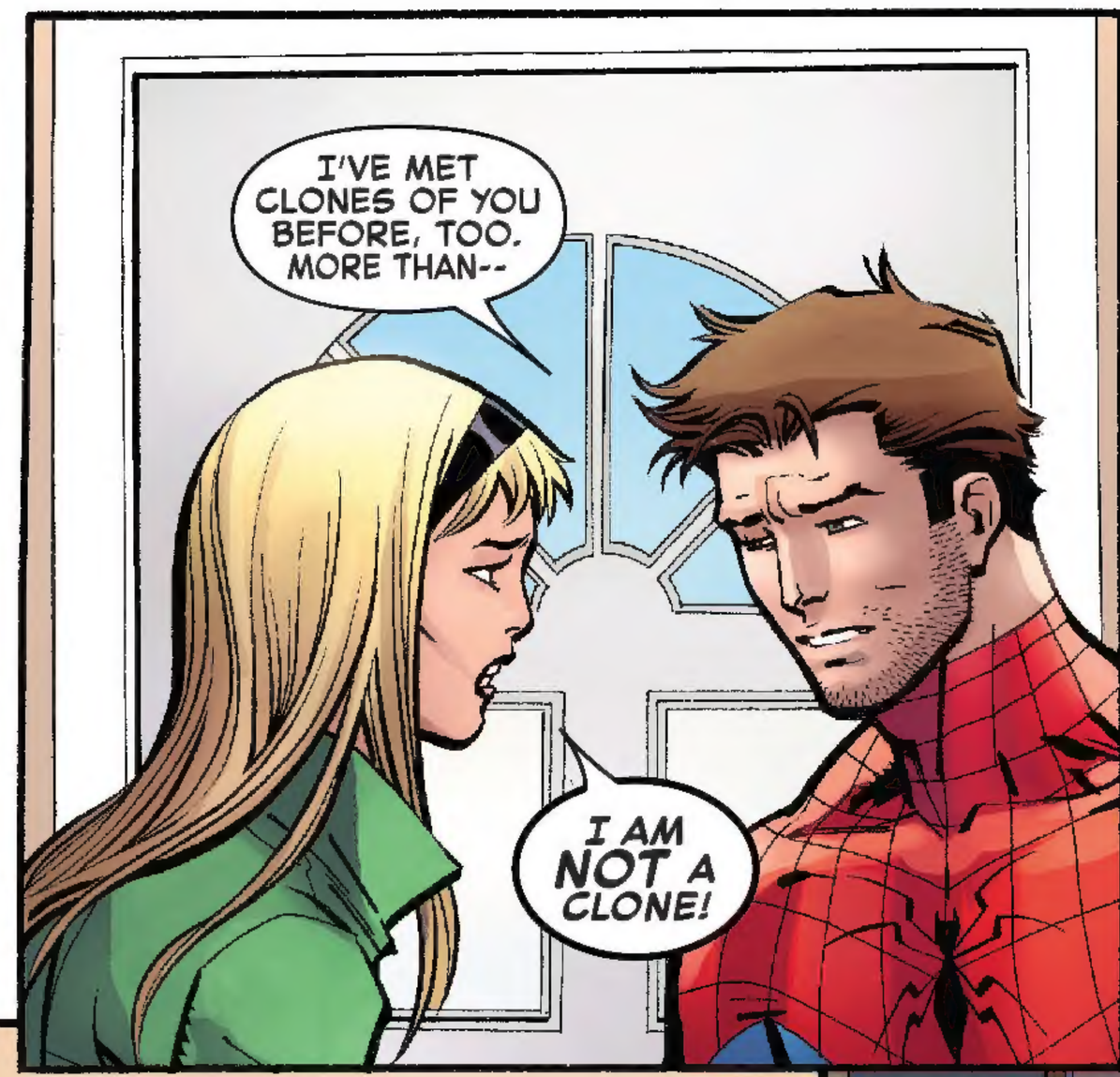

BUT YOU'RE RIGHT. THERE ARE SOME DIFFERENCES. SHE'S IN A BAND.
WHAT?
REALLY? SOUNDS MORE LIKE MARY JANE THAN ME.

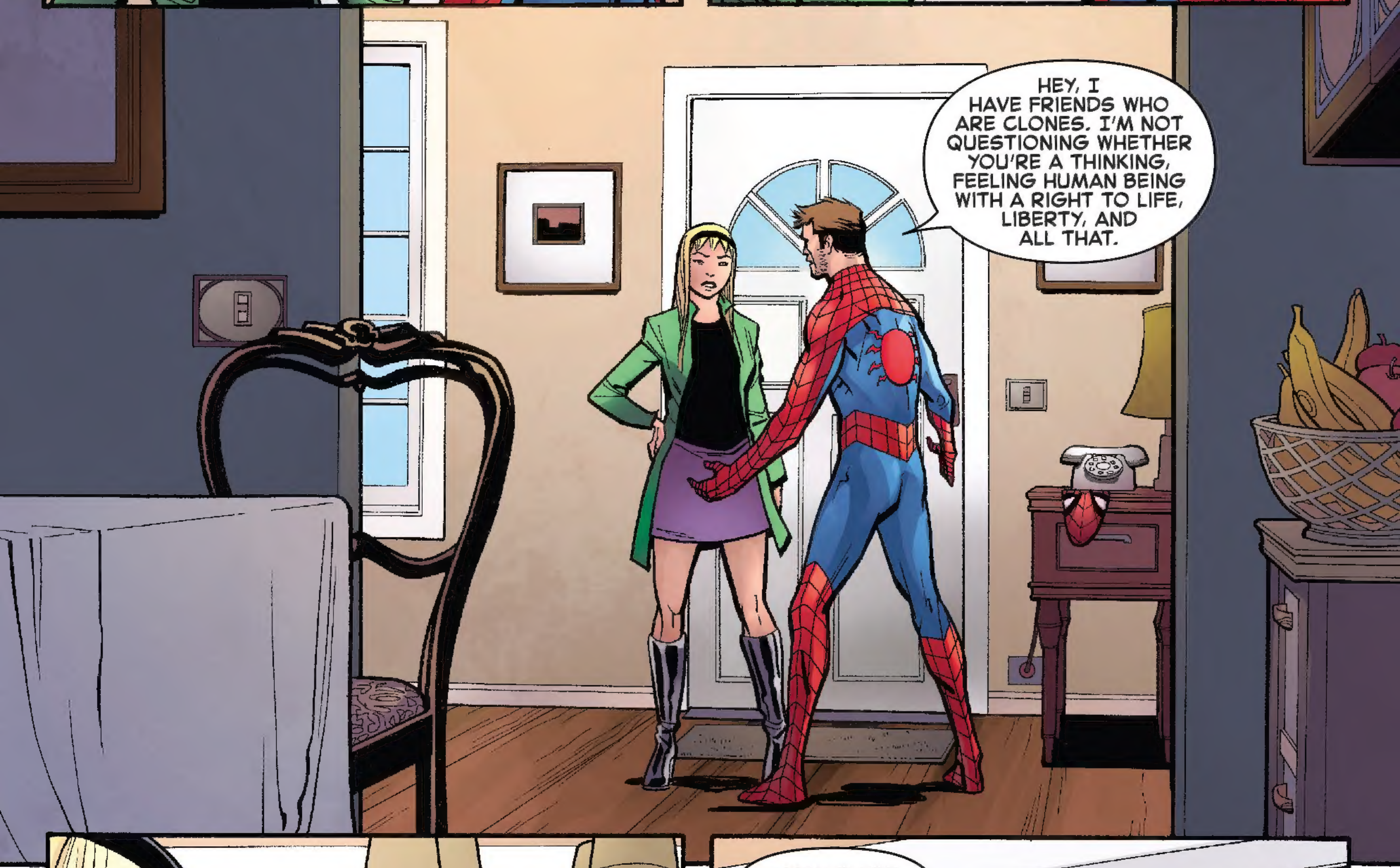

MJ'S IN THE BAND TOO. SHE'S THE LEAD SINGER.
OF *COURSE* SHE IS. WHAT AM I, TAMBOURINE?
YOU'RE ON DRUMS.

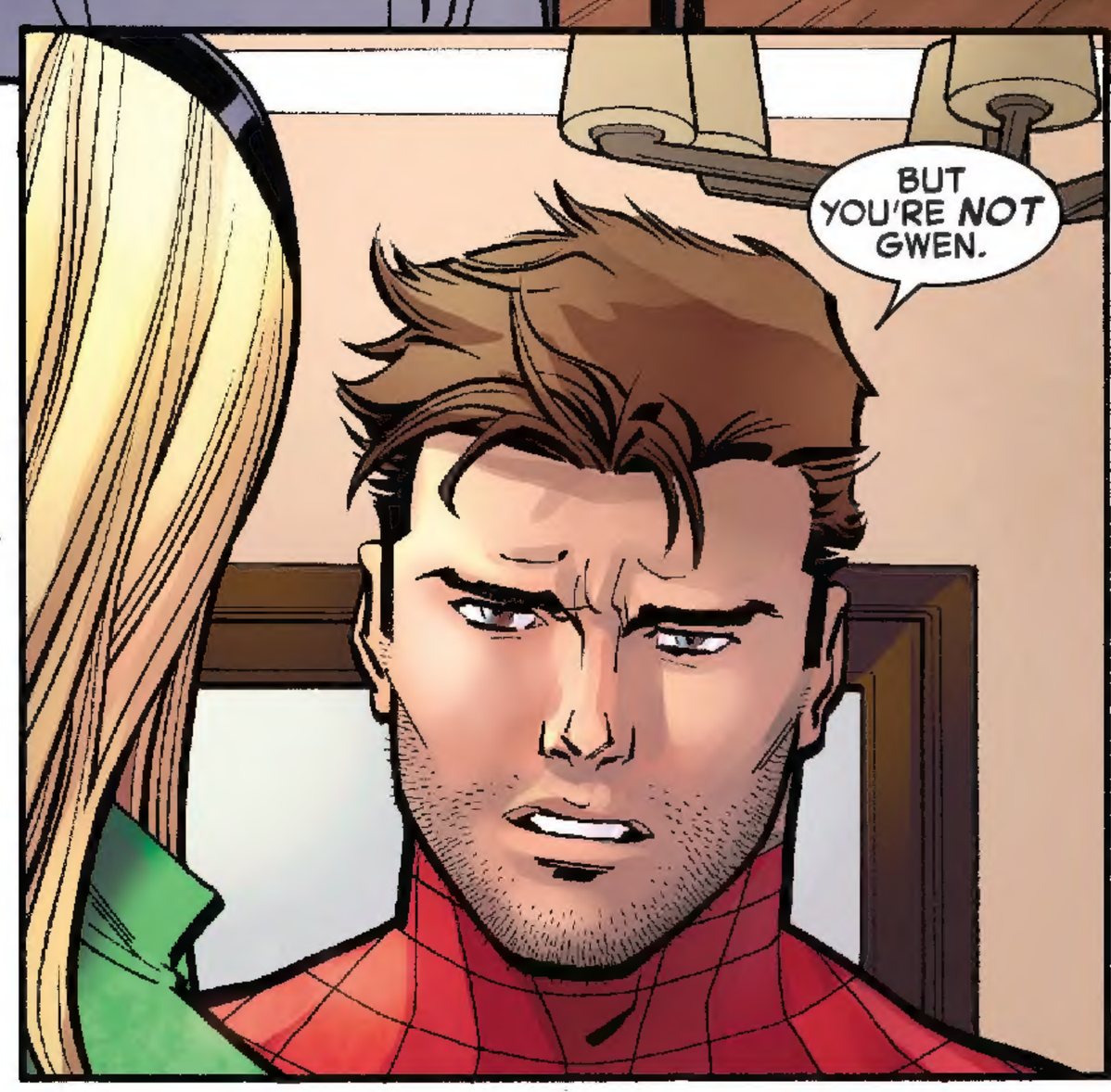


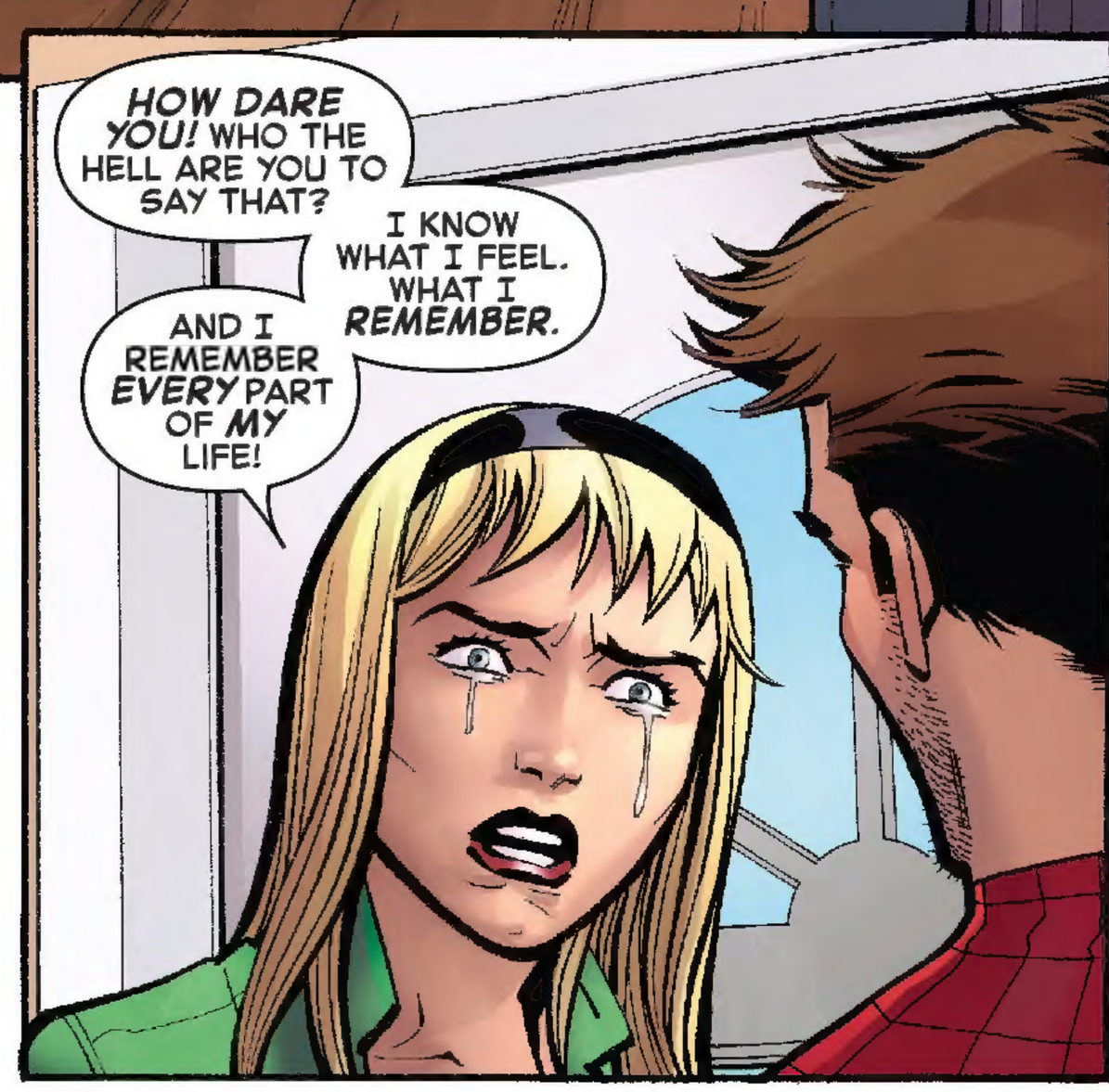

HA HA HA HA HA HA

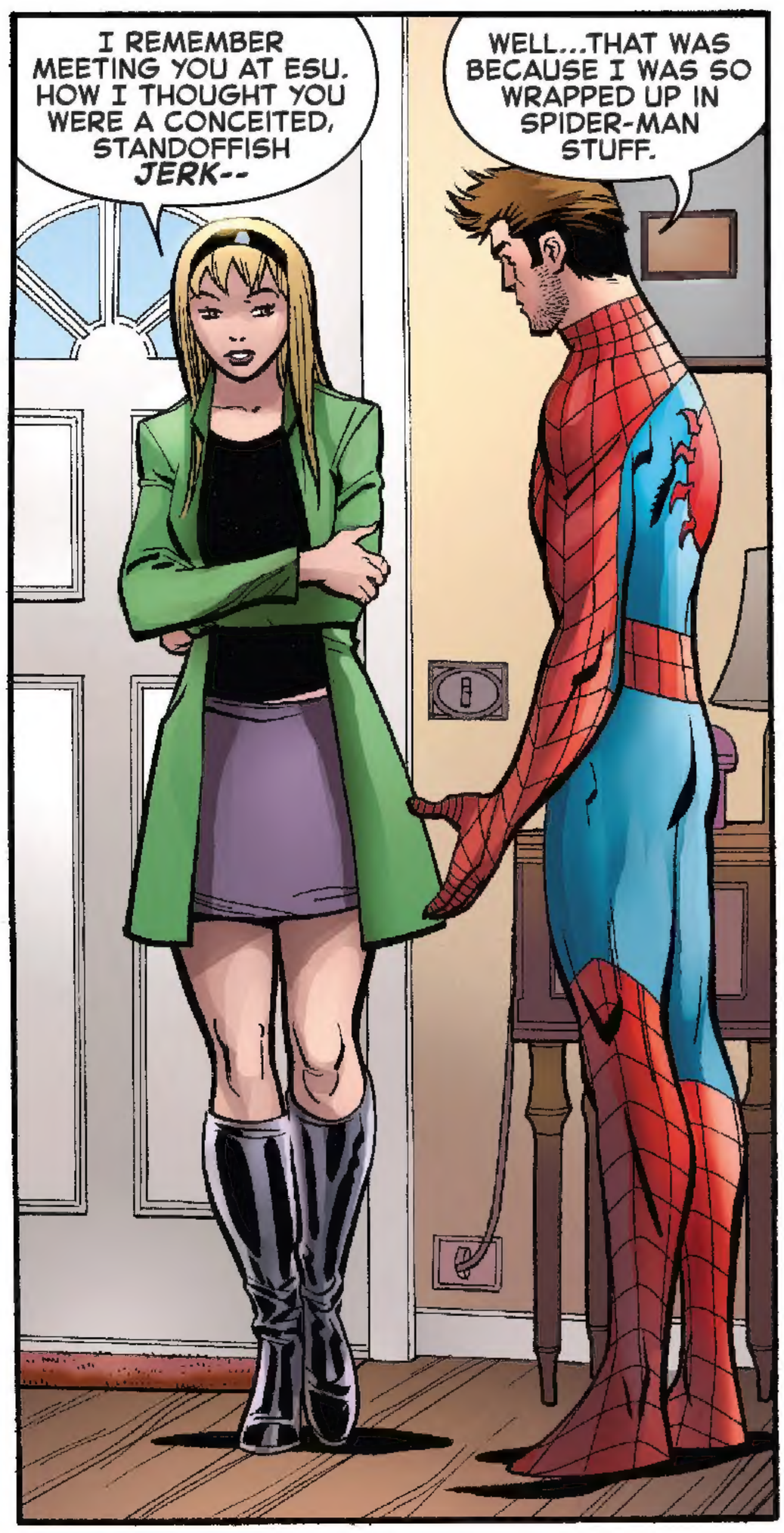
BUT IT'S NOT JUST THAT YOU WERE PREPARED FOR ME. IT'S MORE THAN THAT.
YOU DON'T BELIEVE IT'S ME. BUT I AM. I'M ME.

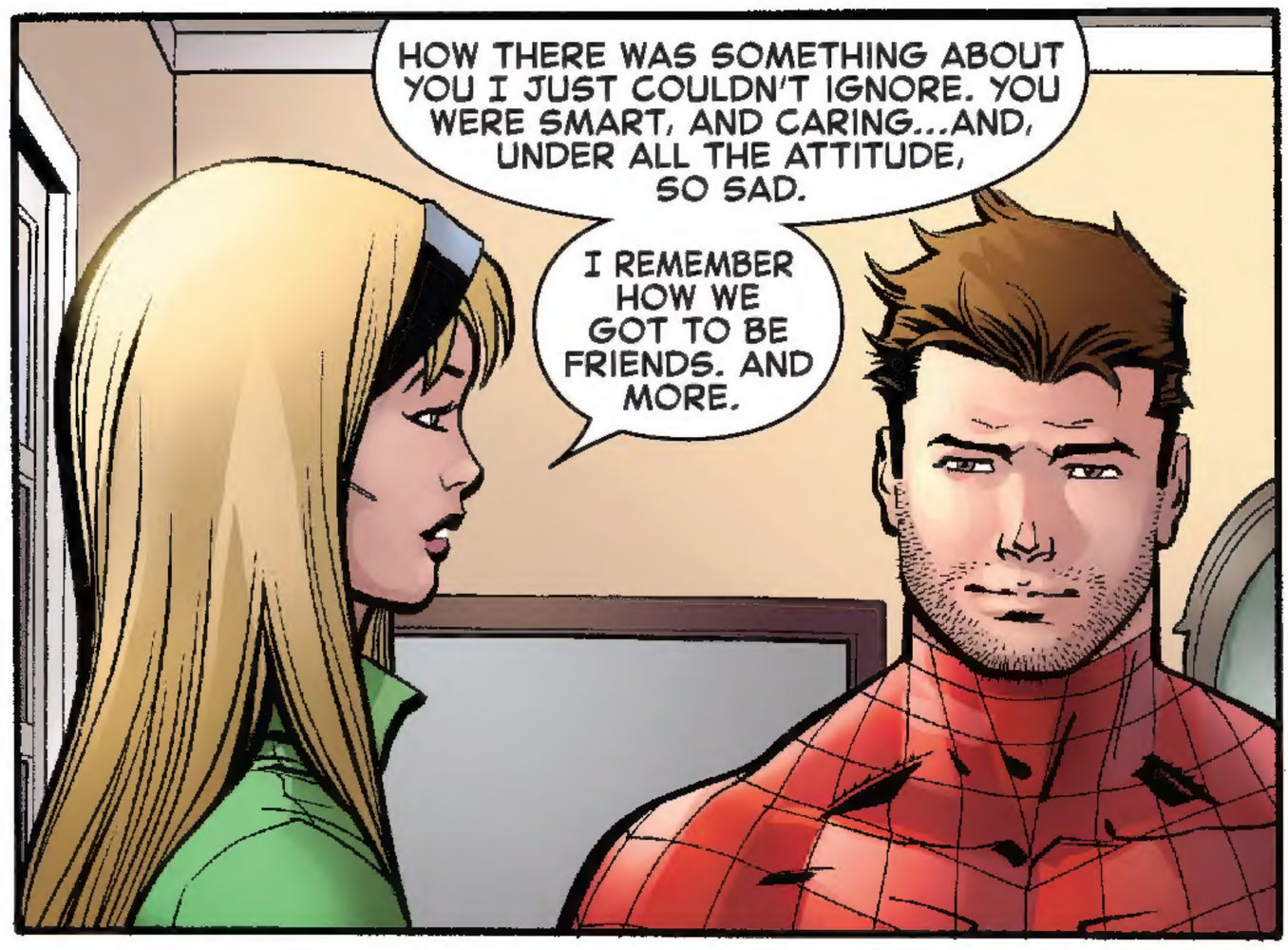

I'VE MET CLONES OF YOU BEFORE, TOO. MORE THAN--
I AM NOT A CLONE!

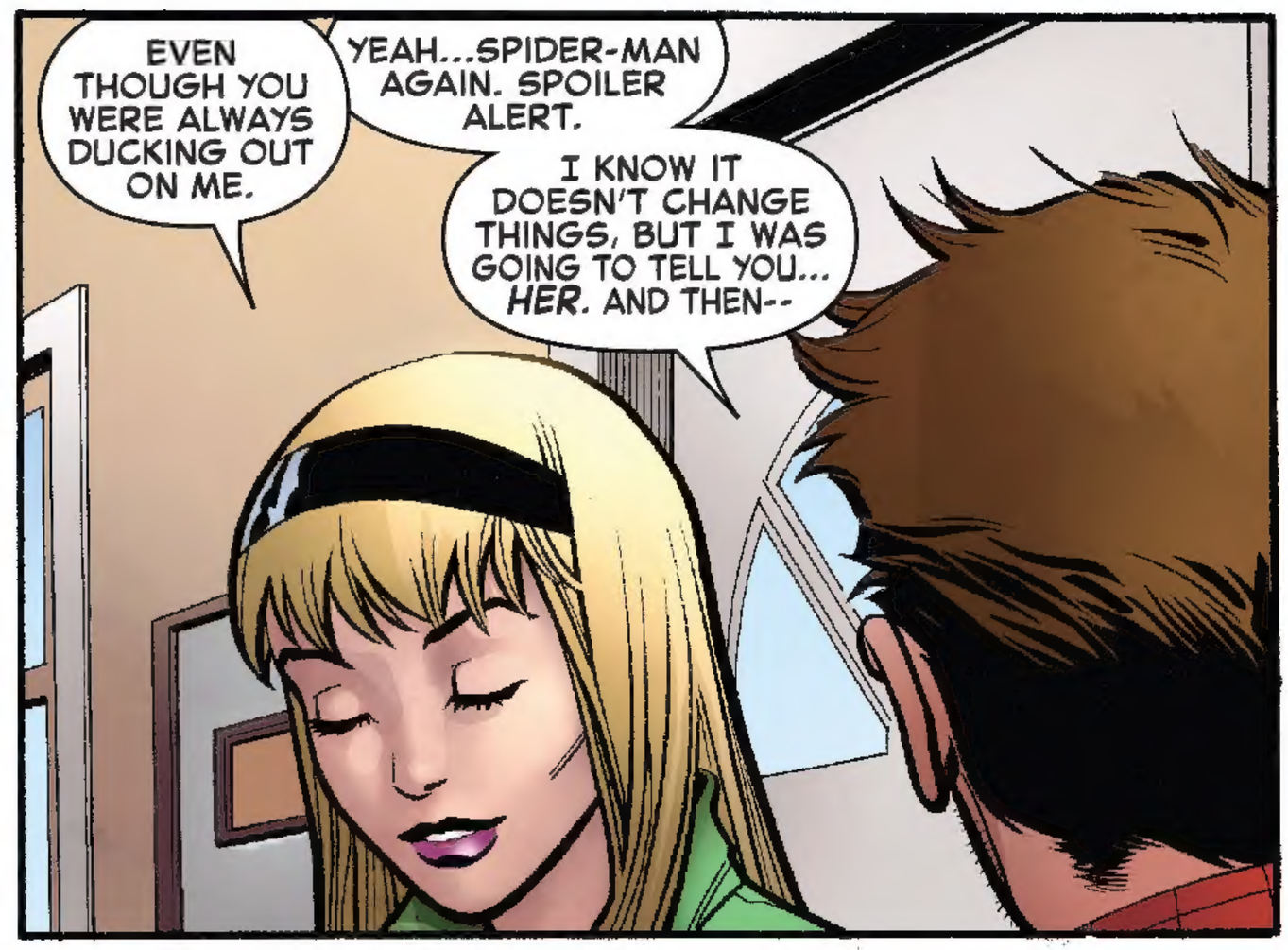

HEY, I HAVE FRIENDS WHO ARE CLONES. I'M NOT QUESTIONING WHETHER YOU'RE A THINKING, FEELING HUMAN BEING WITH A RIGHT TO LIFE, LIBERTY, AND ALL THAT.

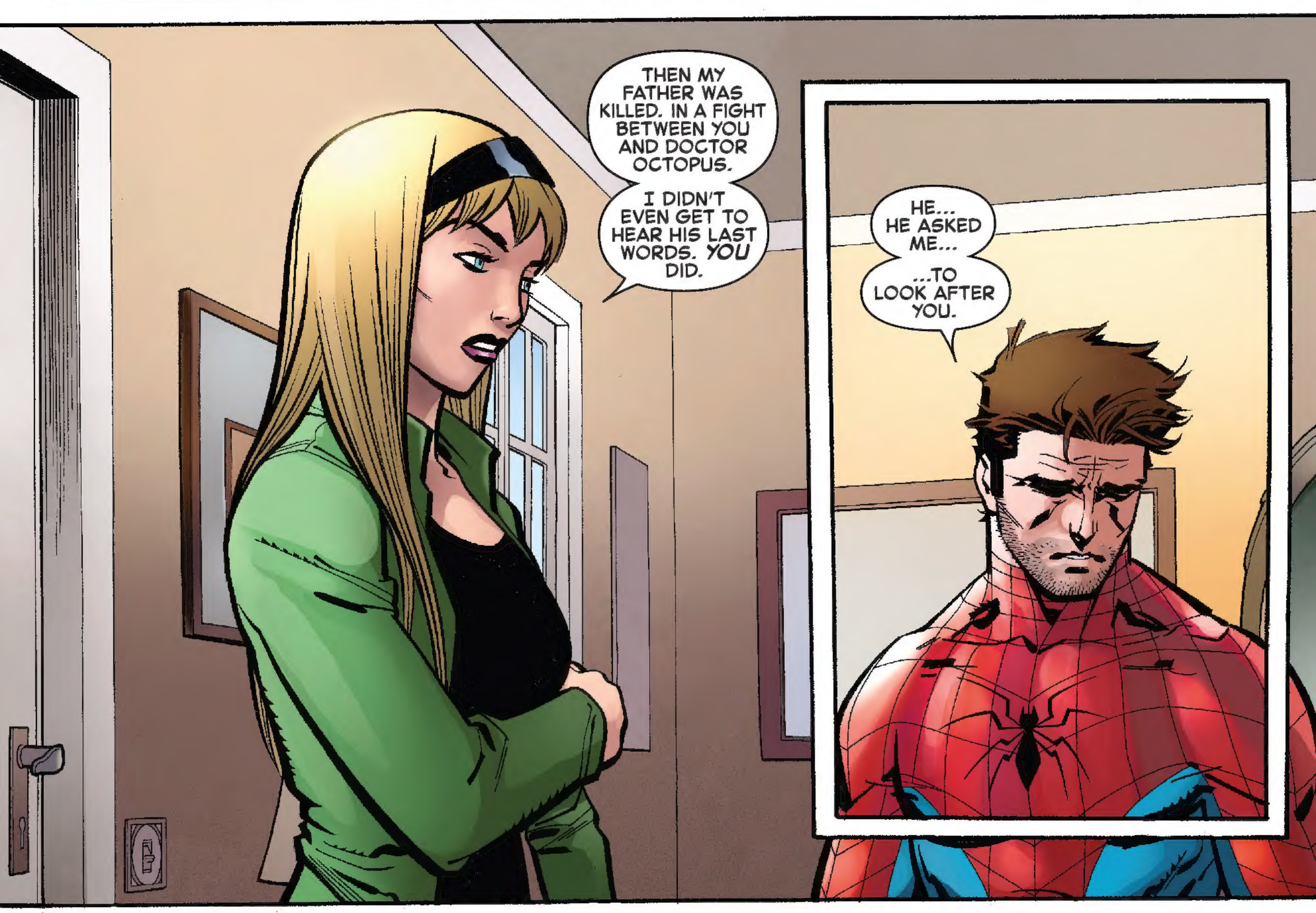

BUT YOU'RE NOT GWEN.

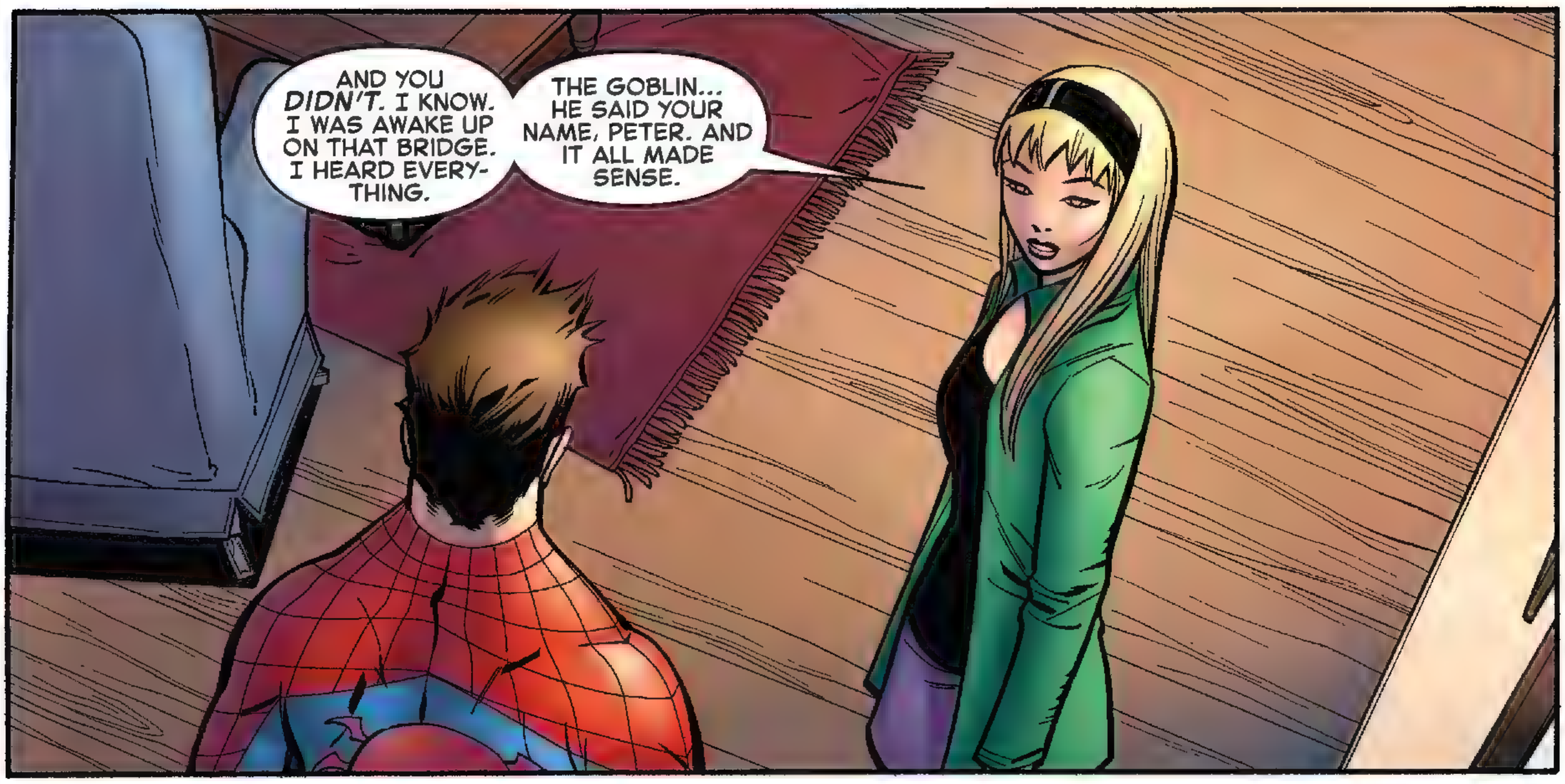

HOW DARE YOU! WHO THE HELL ARE YOU TO SAY THAT?
I KNOW WHAT I FEEL. WHAT I REMEMBER.
AND I REMEMBER EVERY PART OF MY LIFE!

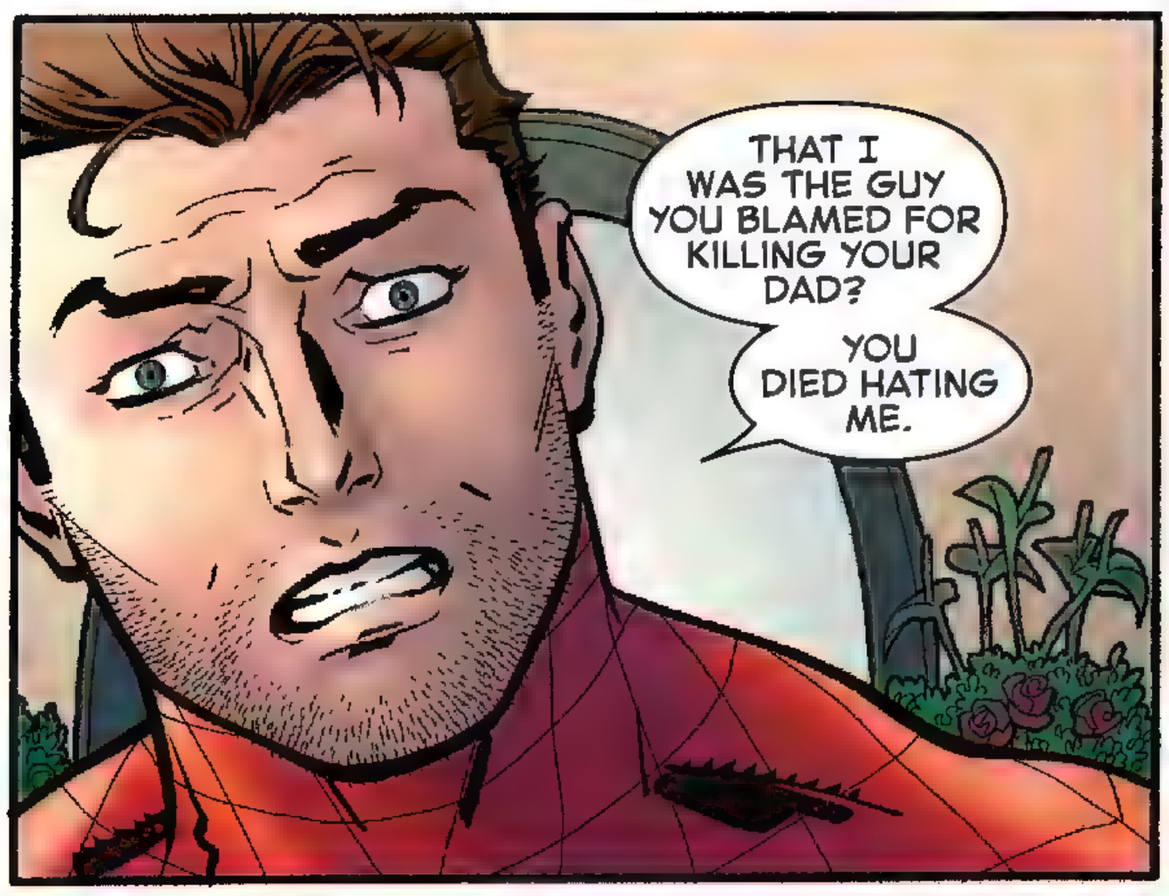

I REMEMBER MEETING YOU AT ESU. HOW I THOUGHT YOU WERE A CONCEITED, STANDOFFISH *JERK*--
WELL...THAT WAS BECAUSE I WAS SO WRAPPED UP IN SPIDER-MAN STUFF.


HOW THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT YOU I JUST COULDN'T IGNORE. YOU WERE SMART, AND CARING...AND, UNDER ALL THE ATTITUDE, SO SAD.
I REMEMBER HOW WE GOT TO BE FRIENDS. AND MORE.

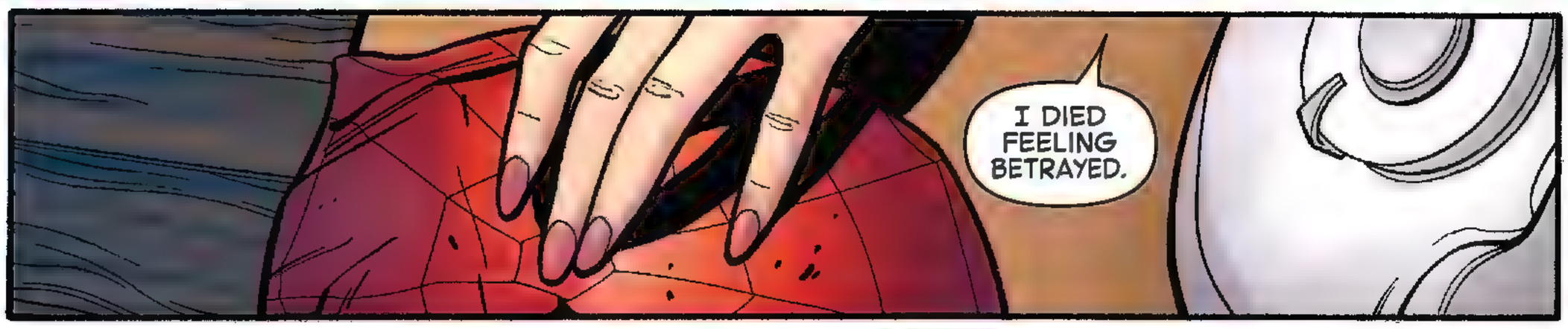

EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE ALWAYS DUCKING OUT ON ME.
YEAH...SPIDER-MAN AGAIN. SPOILER ALERT.
I KNOW IT DOESN'T CHANGE THINGS, BUT I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU... *HER*. AND THEN--

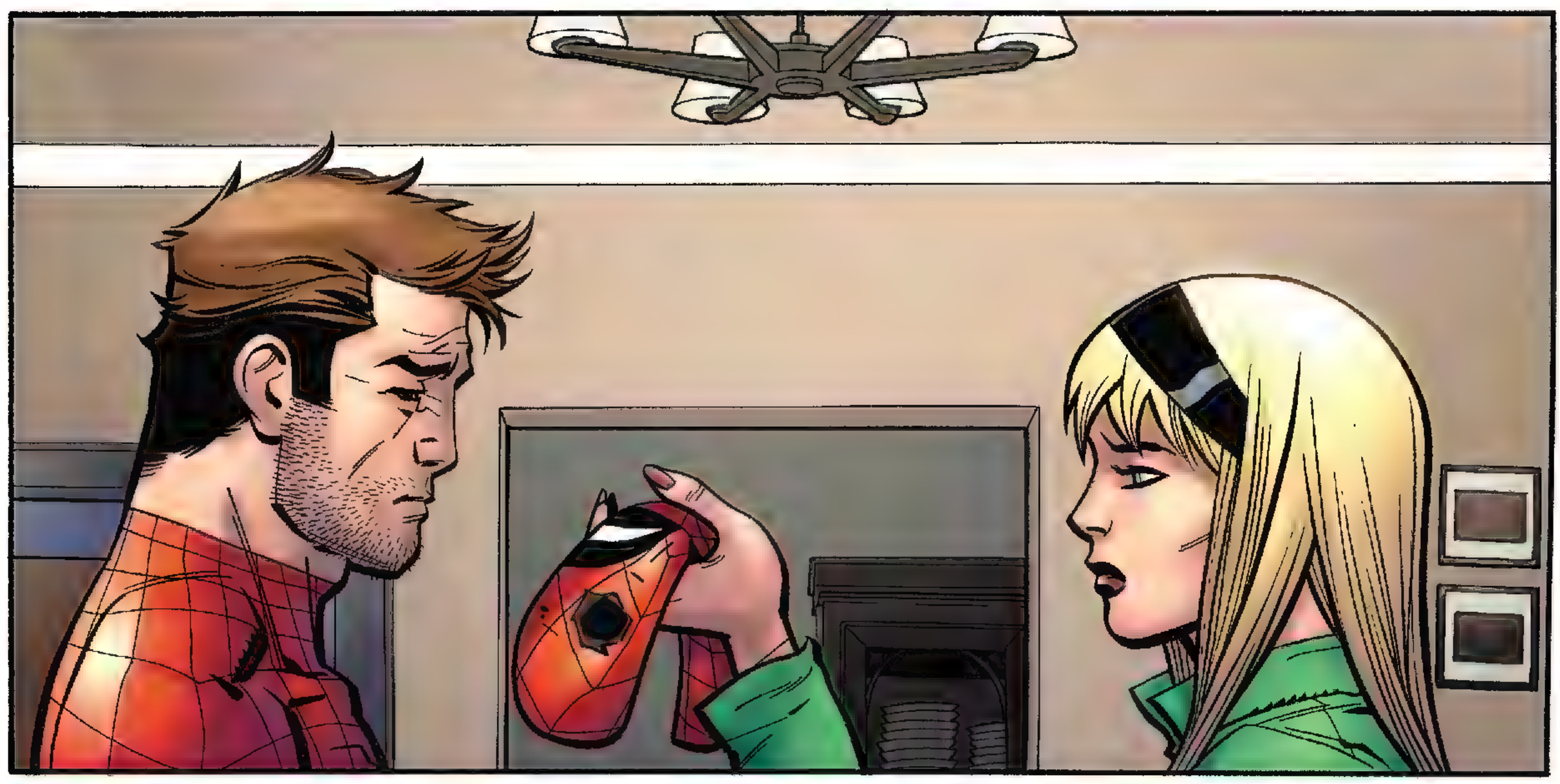

THEN MY FATHER WAS KILLED. IN A FIGHT BETWEEN YOU AND DOCTOR OCTOPUS.
I DIDN'T EVEN GET TO HEAR HIS LAST WORDS. *YOU* DID.
HE... HE ASKED ME...
...TO LOOK AFTER YOU.

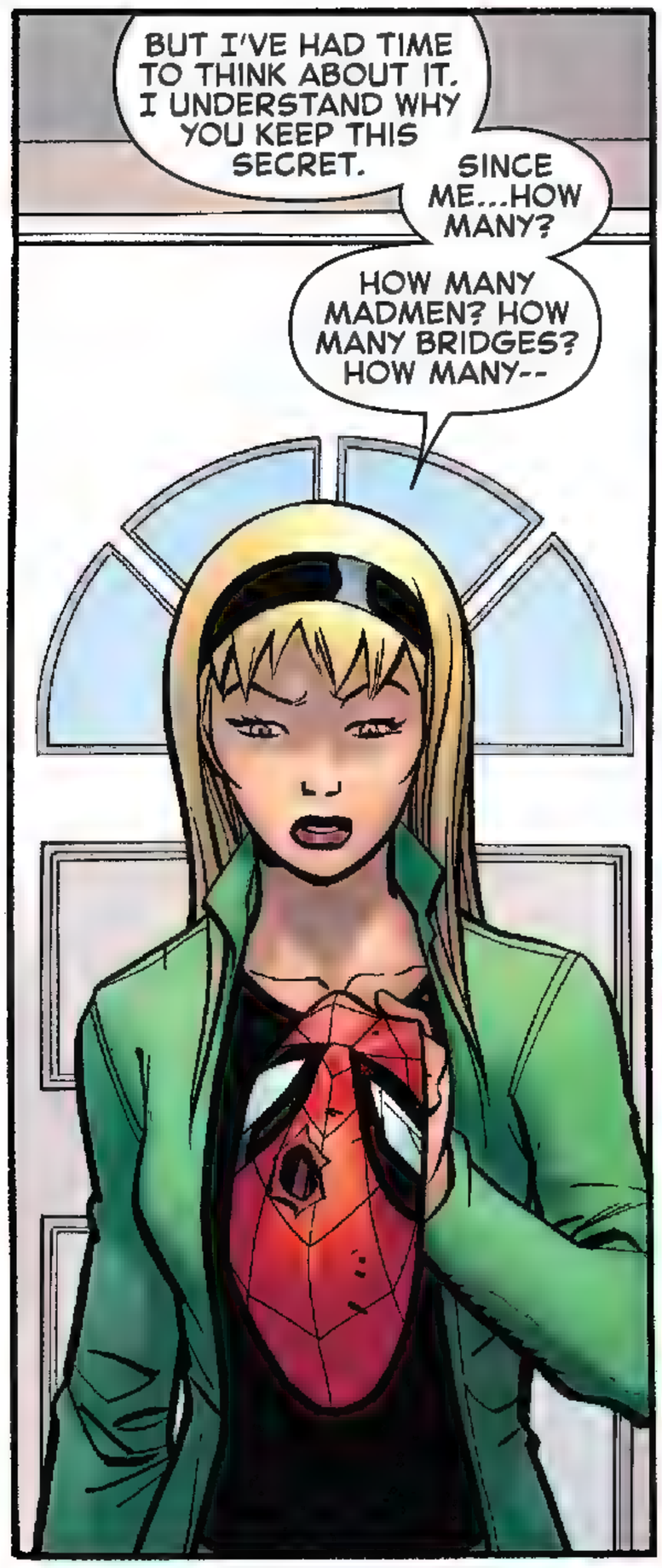

AND YOU *DIDN'T*. I KNOW. I WAS AWAKE UP ON THAT BRIDGE. I HEARD EVERY-THING.
THE GOBLIN... HE SAID YOUR NAME, PETER. AND IT ALL MADE SENSE.

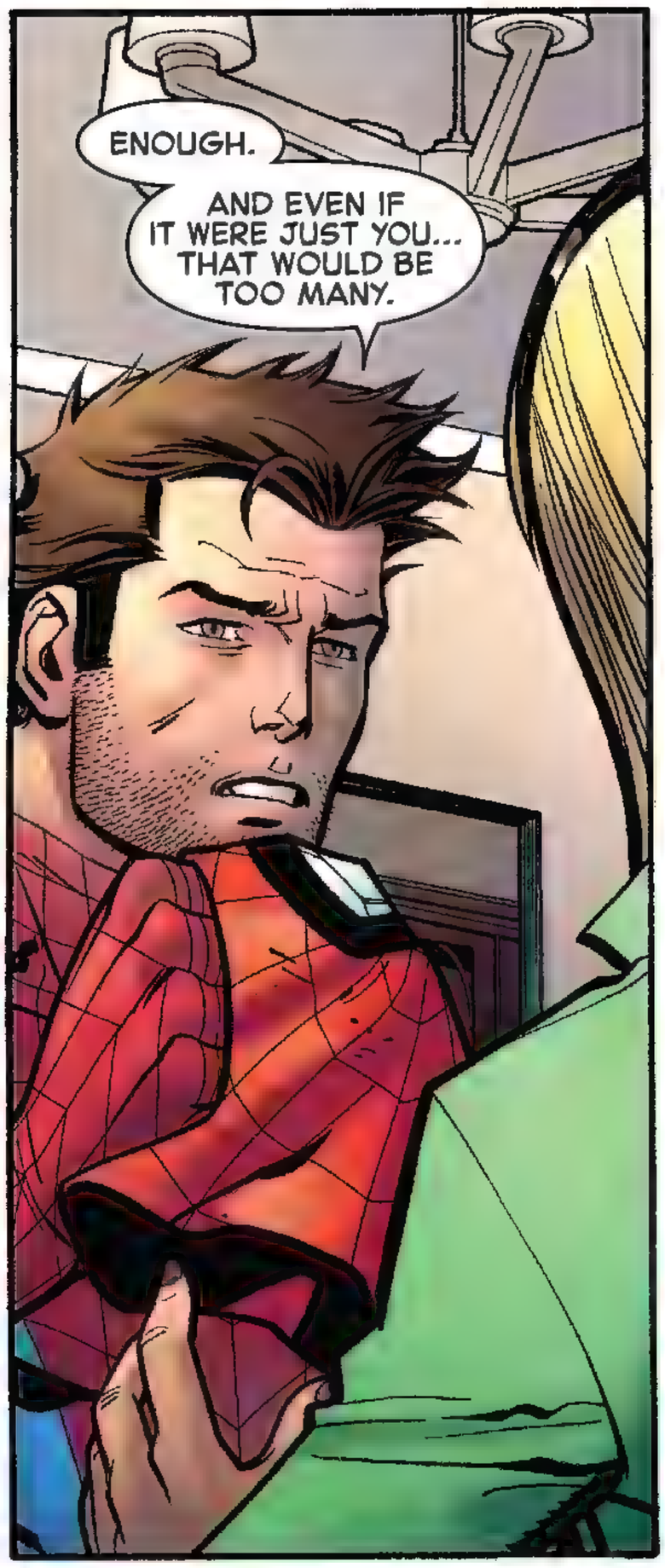

THAT I WAS THE GUY YOU BLAMED FOR KILLING YOUR DAD?
YOU DIED HATING ME.

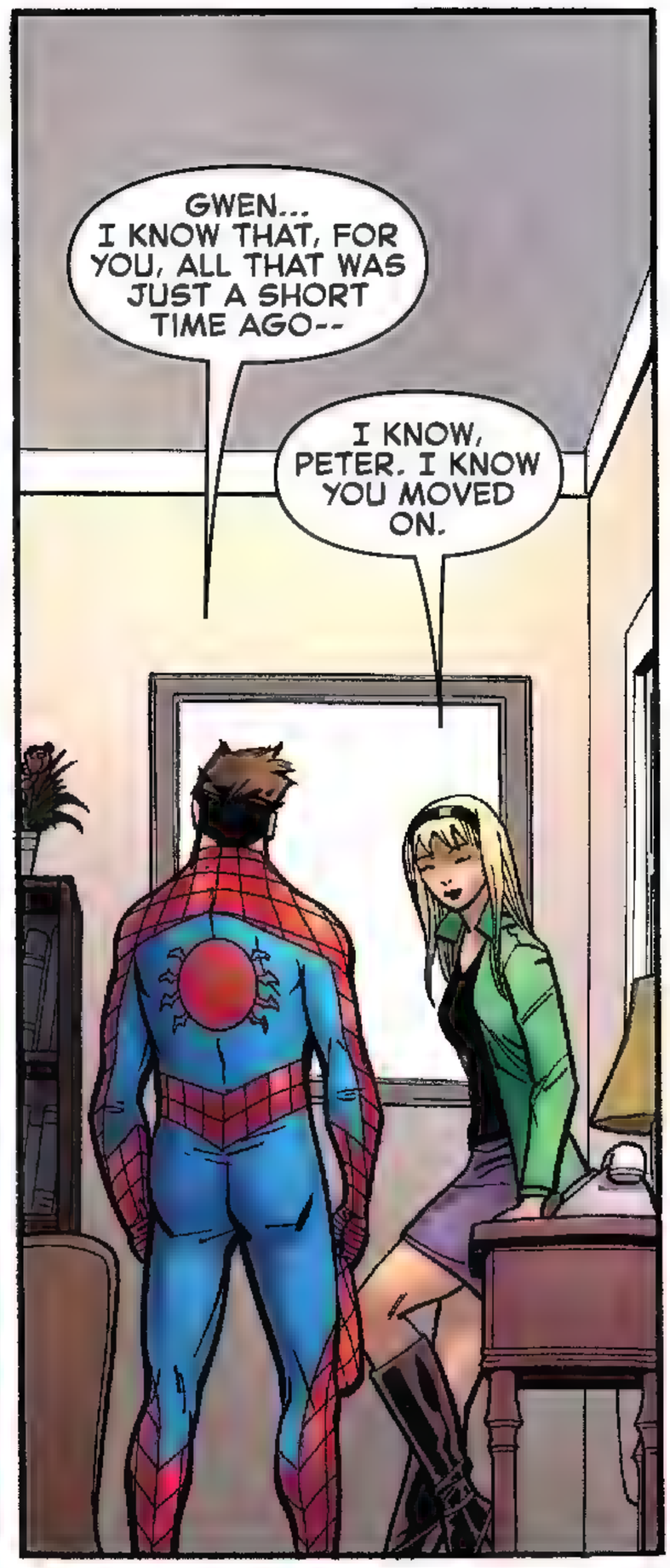
NO.
I *ALWAYS* LOVED YOU. EVEN THEN.

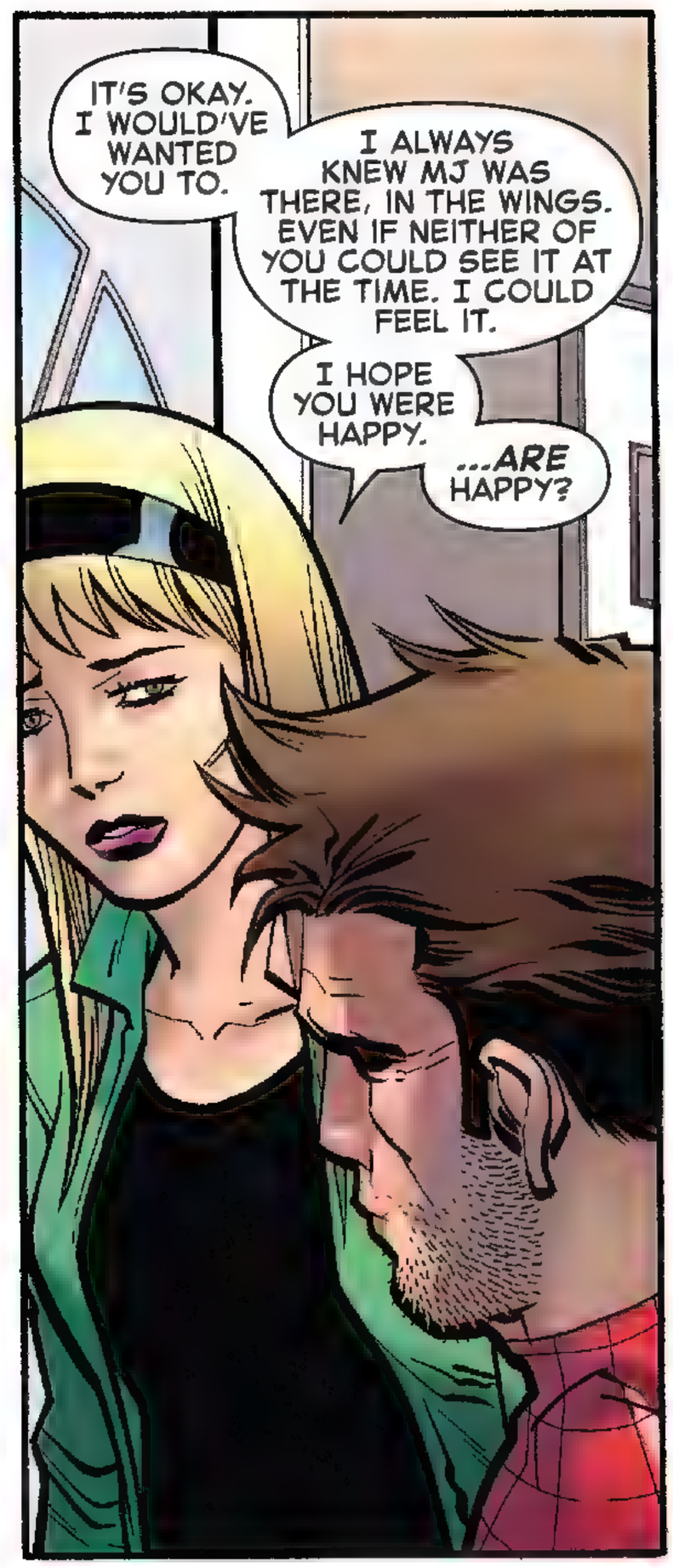

I DIED FEELING BETRAYED.

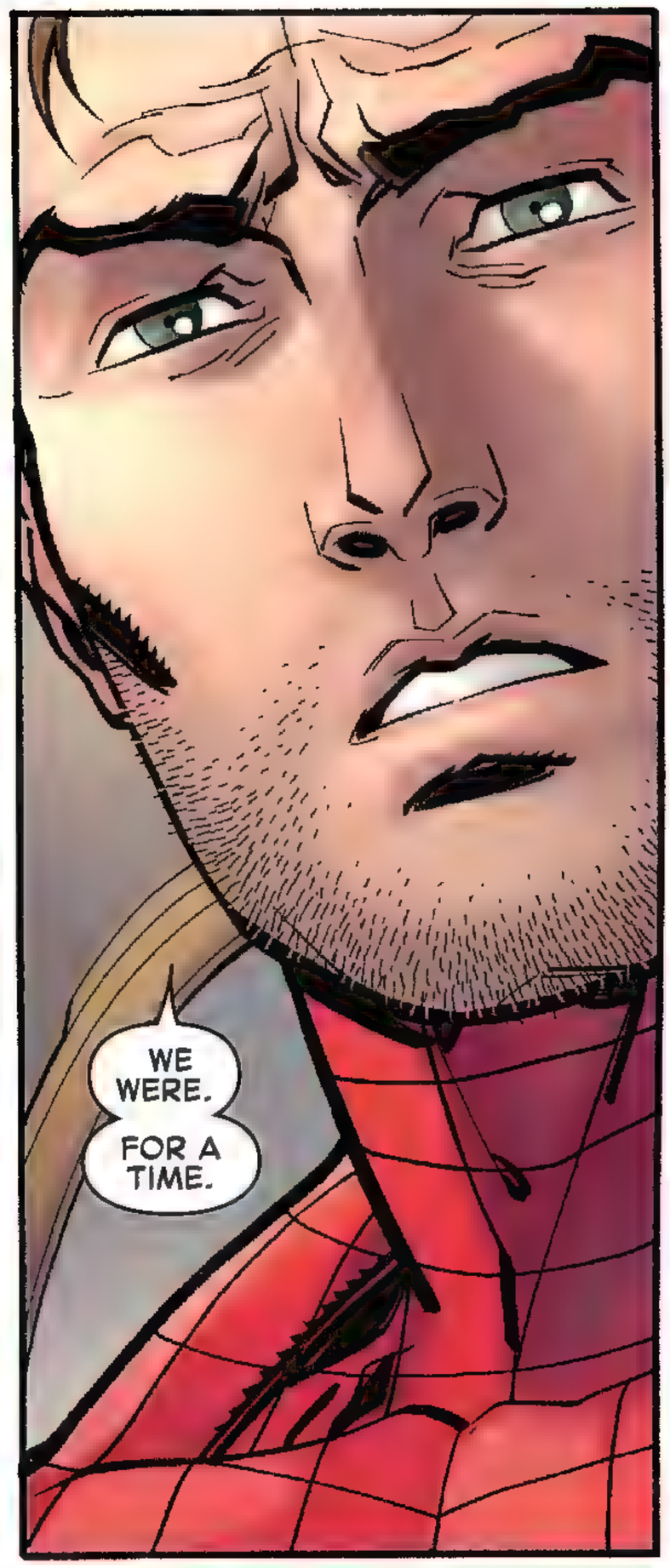


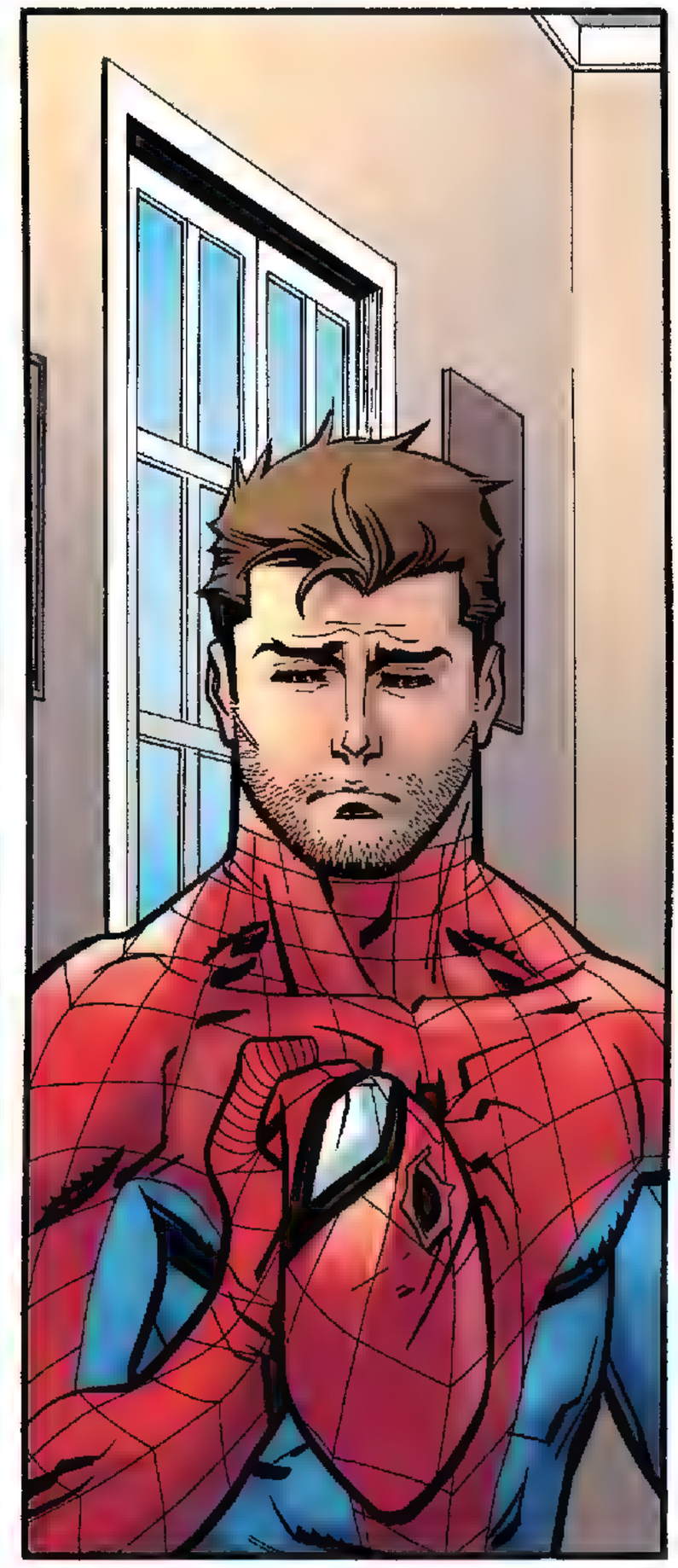

BUT I'VE HAD TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT. I UNDERSTAND WHY YOU KEEP THIS SECRET.
SINCE ME...HOW MANY?
HOW MANY MADMEN? HOW MANY BRIDGES? HOW MANY--

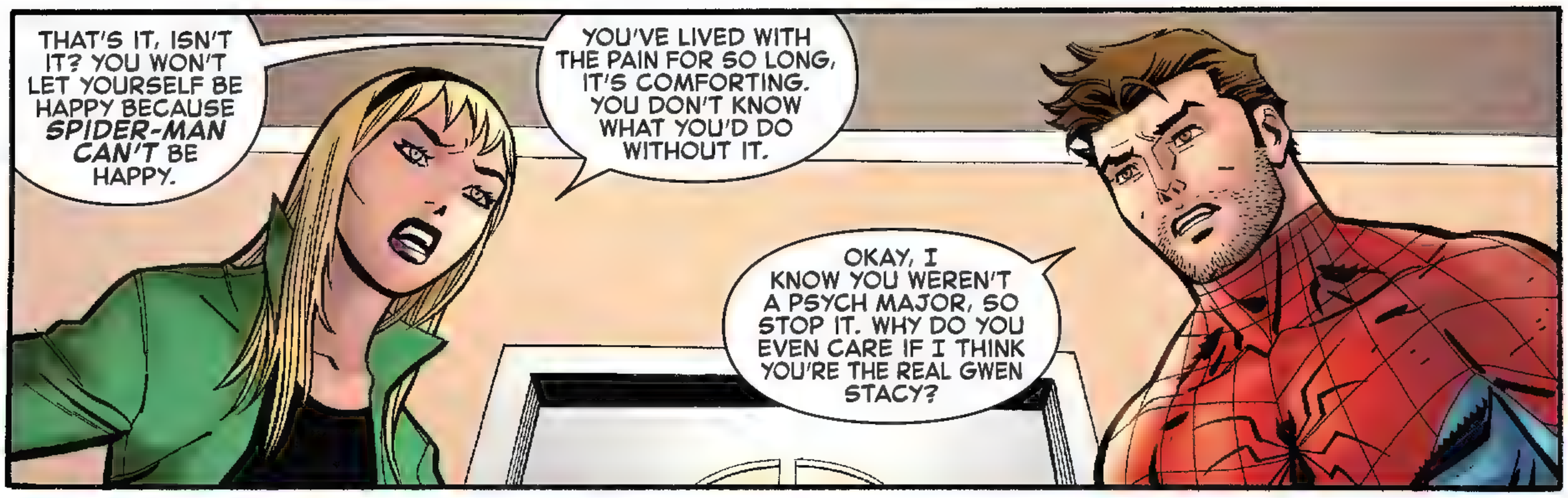

ENOUGH.
AND EVEN IF IT WERE JUST YOU... THAT WOULD BE TOO MANY.

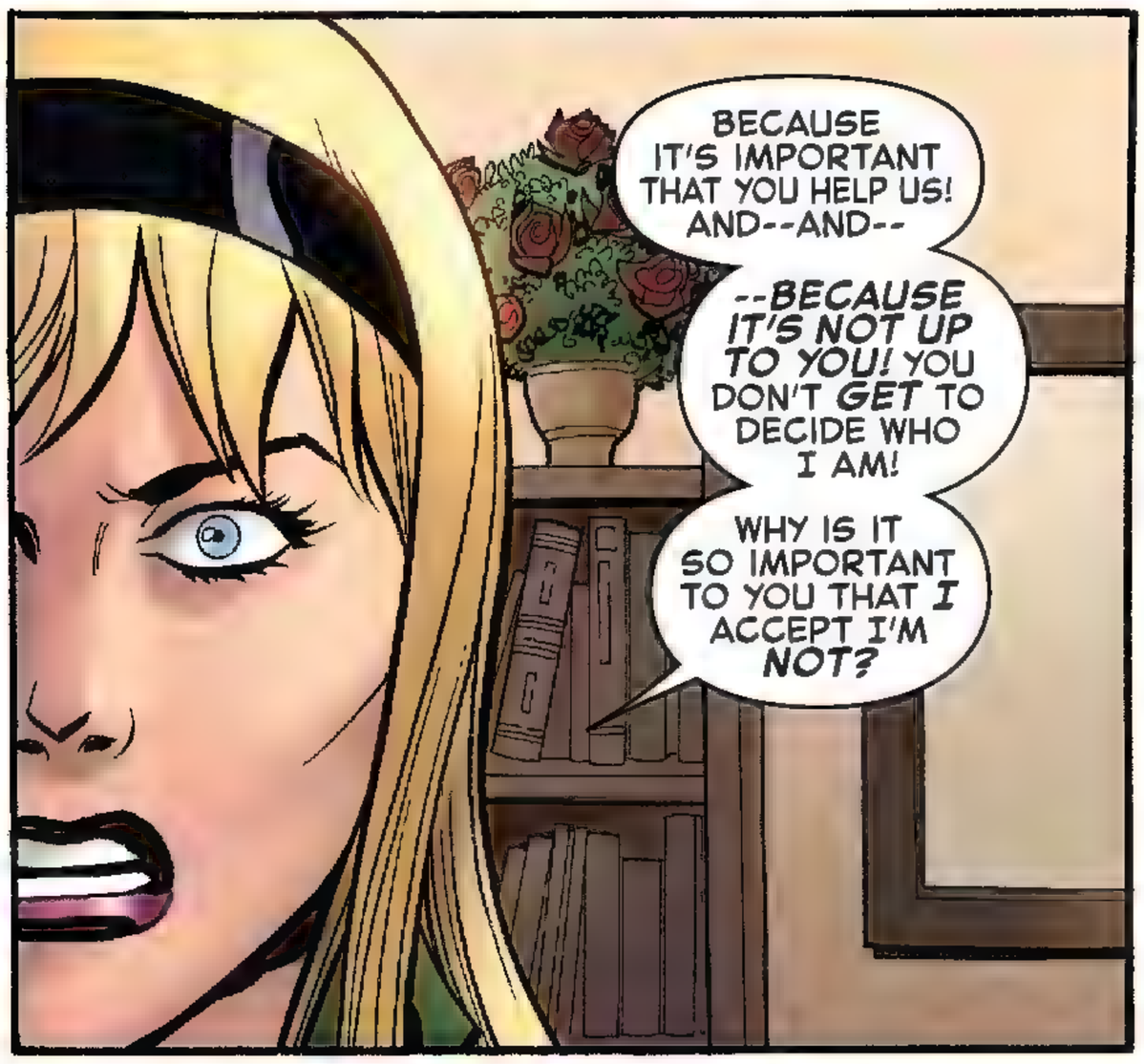

GWEN... I KNOW THAT, FOR YOU, ALL THAT WAS JUST A SHORT TIME AGO--
I KNOW, PETER. I KNOW YOU MOVED ON.


IT'S OKAY. I WOULD'VE WANTED YOU TO.
I ALWAYS KNEW MJ WAS THERE, IN THE WINGS. EVEN IF NEITHER OF YOU COULD SEE IT AT THE TIME. I COULD FEEL IT.
I HOPE YOU WERE HAPPY.
...ARE HAPPY?

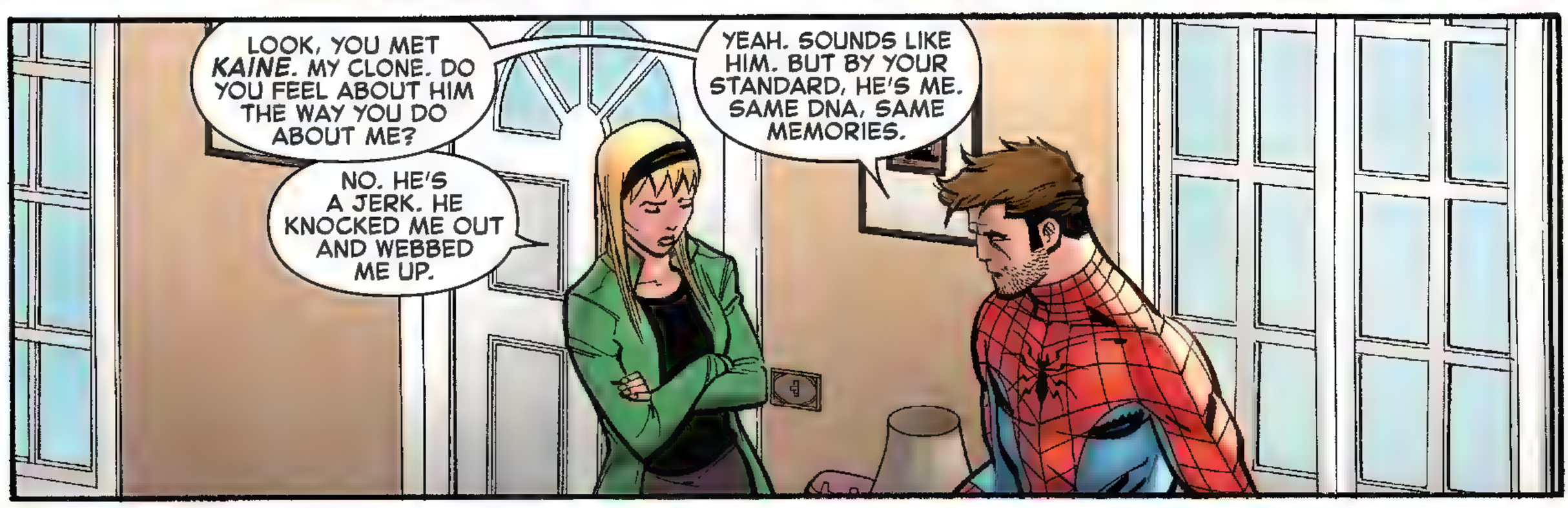

WE WERE.
FOR A TIME.

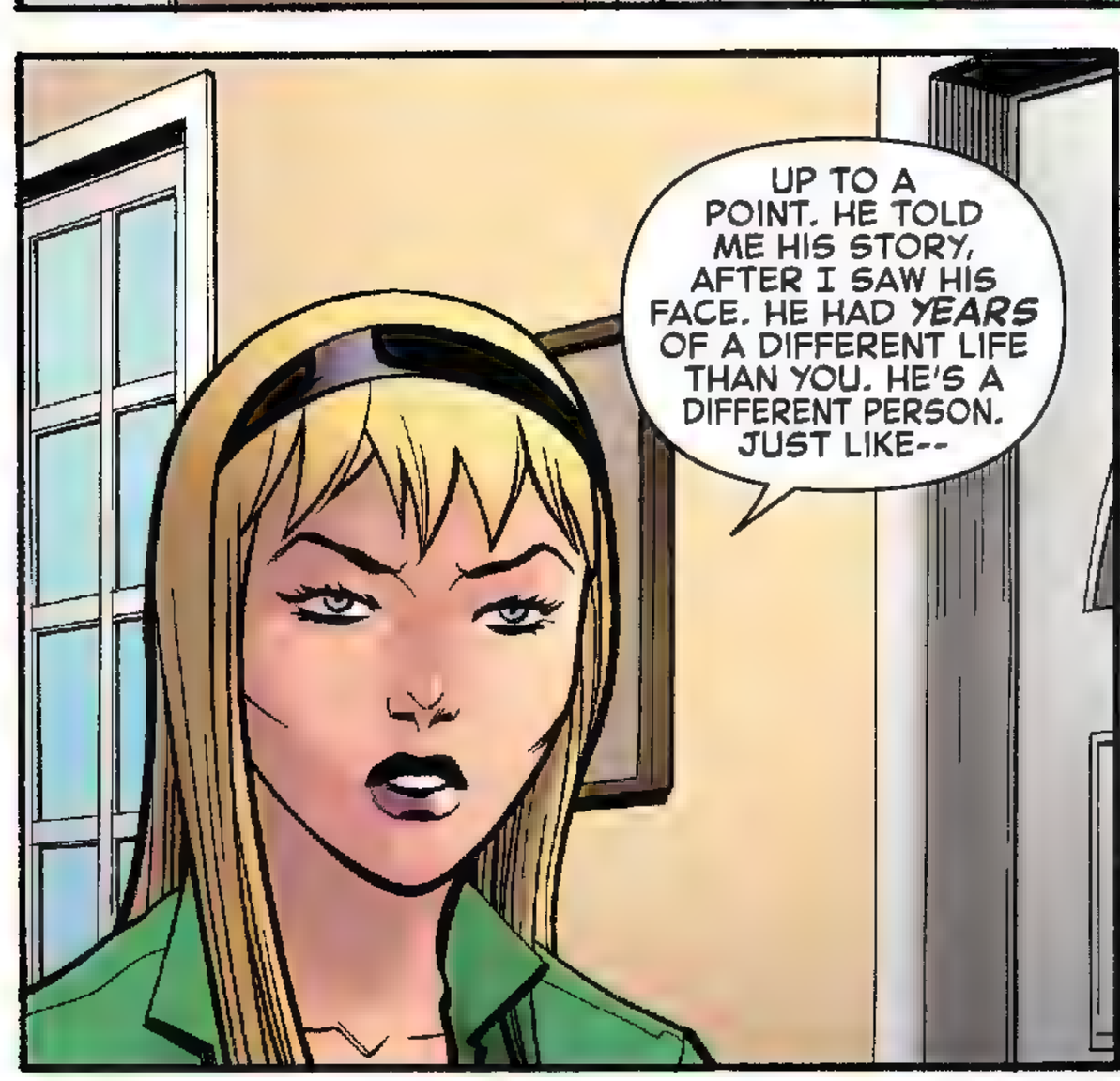


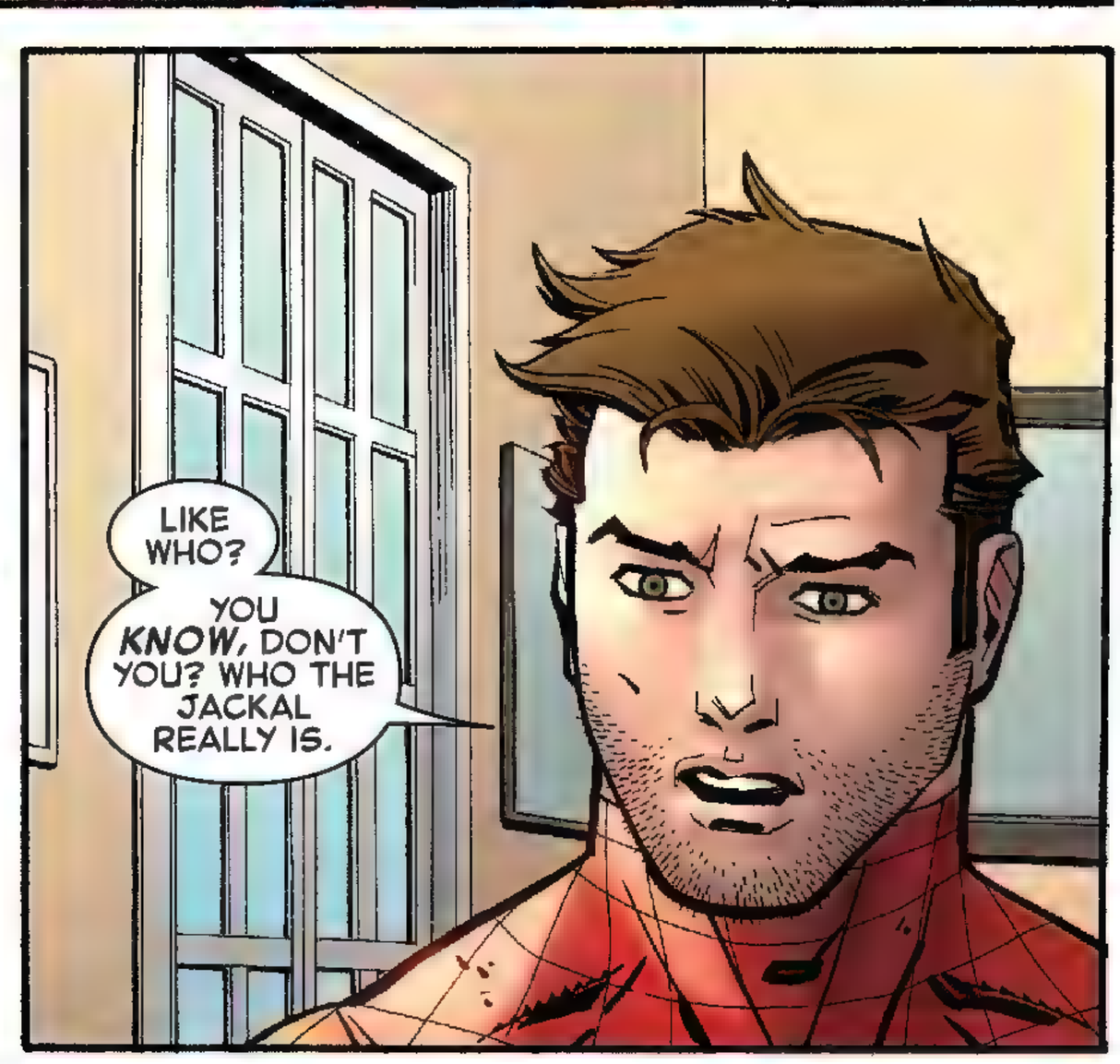

THAT'S IT, ISN'T IT? YOU WON'T LET YOURSELF BE HAPPY BECAUSE *SPIDER-MAN CAN'T* BE HAPPY.
YOU'VE LIVED WITH THE PAIN FOR SO LONG, IT'S COMFORTING. YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'D DO WITHOUT IT.
OKAY, I KNOW YOU WEREN'T A PSYCH MAJOR, SO STOP IT. WHY DO YOU EVEN CARE IF I THINK YOU'RE THE REAL GWEN STACY?

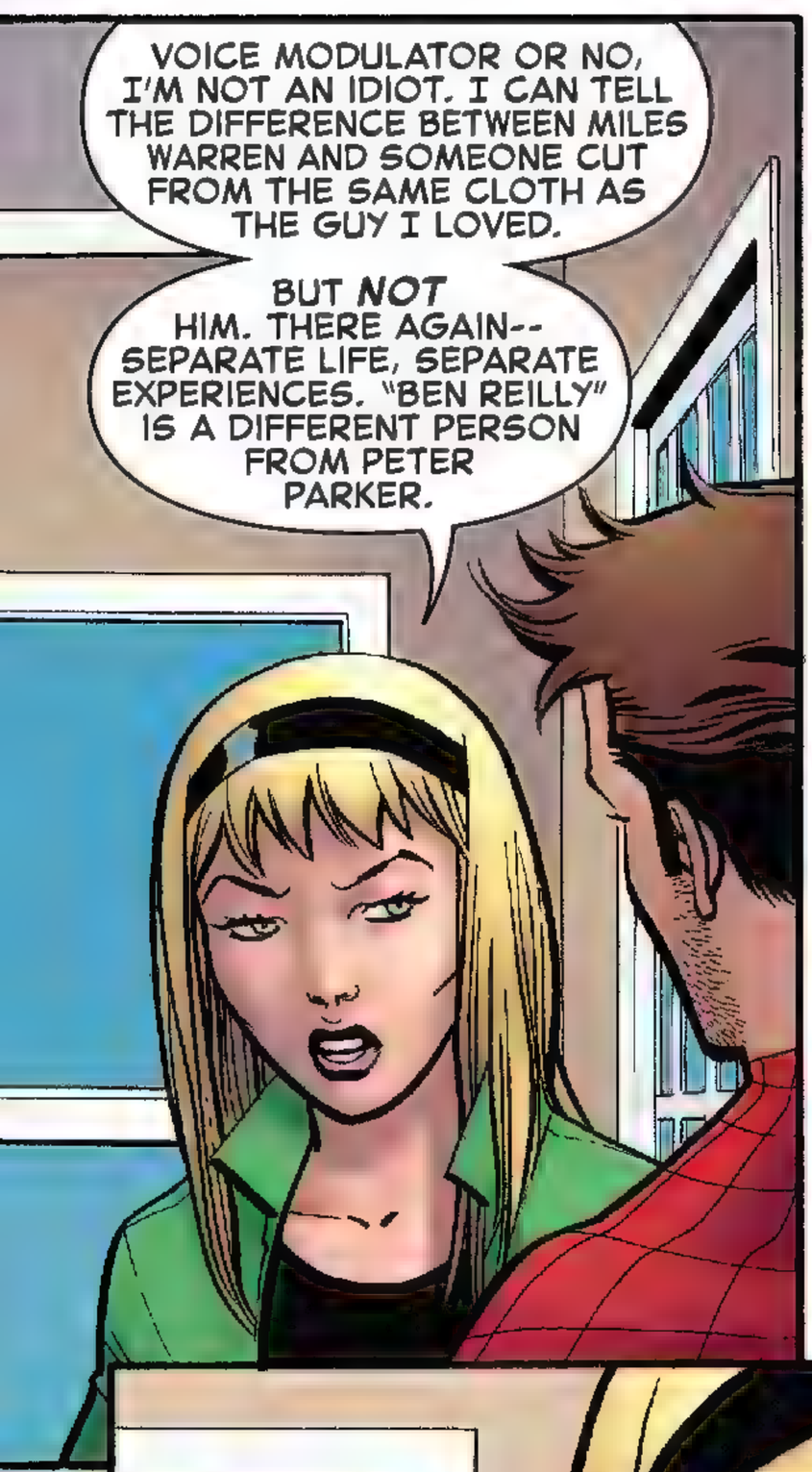

BECAUSE IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU HELP US! AND--AND--
--BECAUSE IT'S NOT UP TO YOU! YOU DON'T *GET* TO DECIDE WHO I AM!
WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO YOU THAT *I* ACCEPT I'M *NOT?*

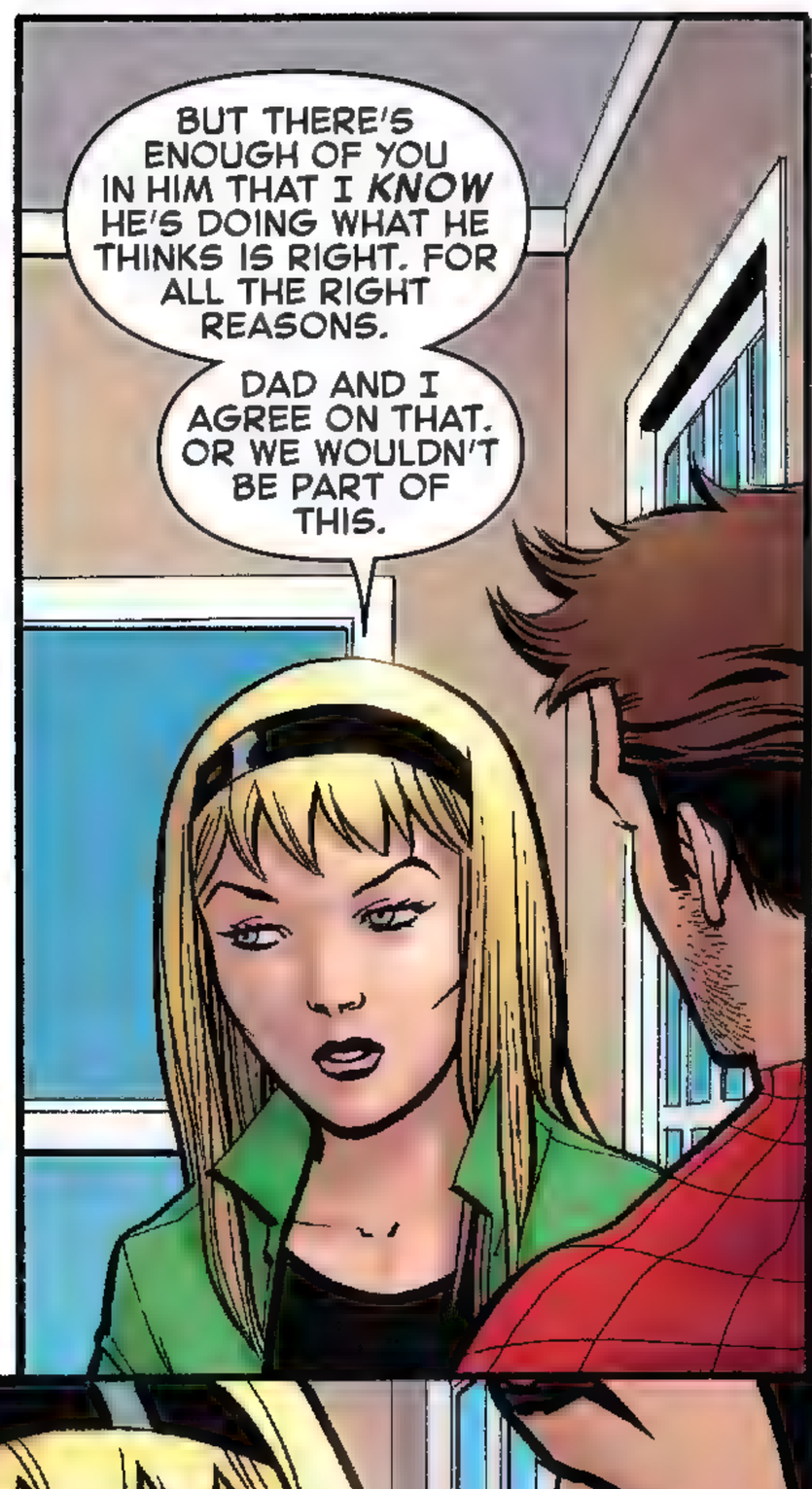
I DON'T NEED YOU TO ACCEPT THAT. JUST TO UNDERSTAND WHY I FEEL THE WAY I DO. 'CAUSE EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE NOT *MY* GWEN...
...I DON'T THINK I COULD STAND HAVING YOU HATE ME.

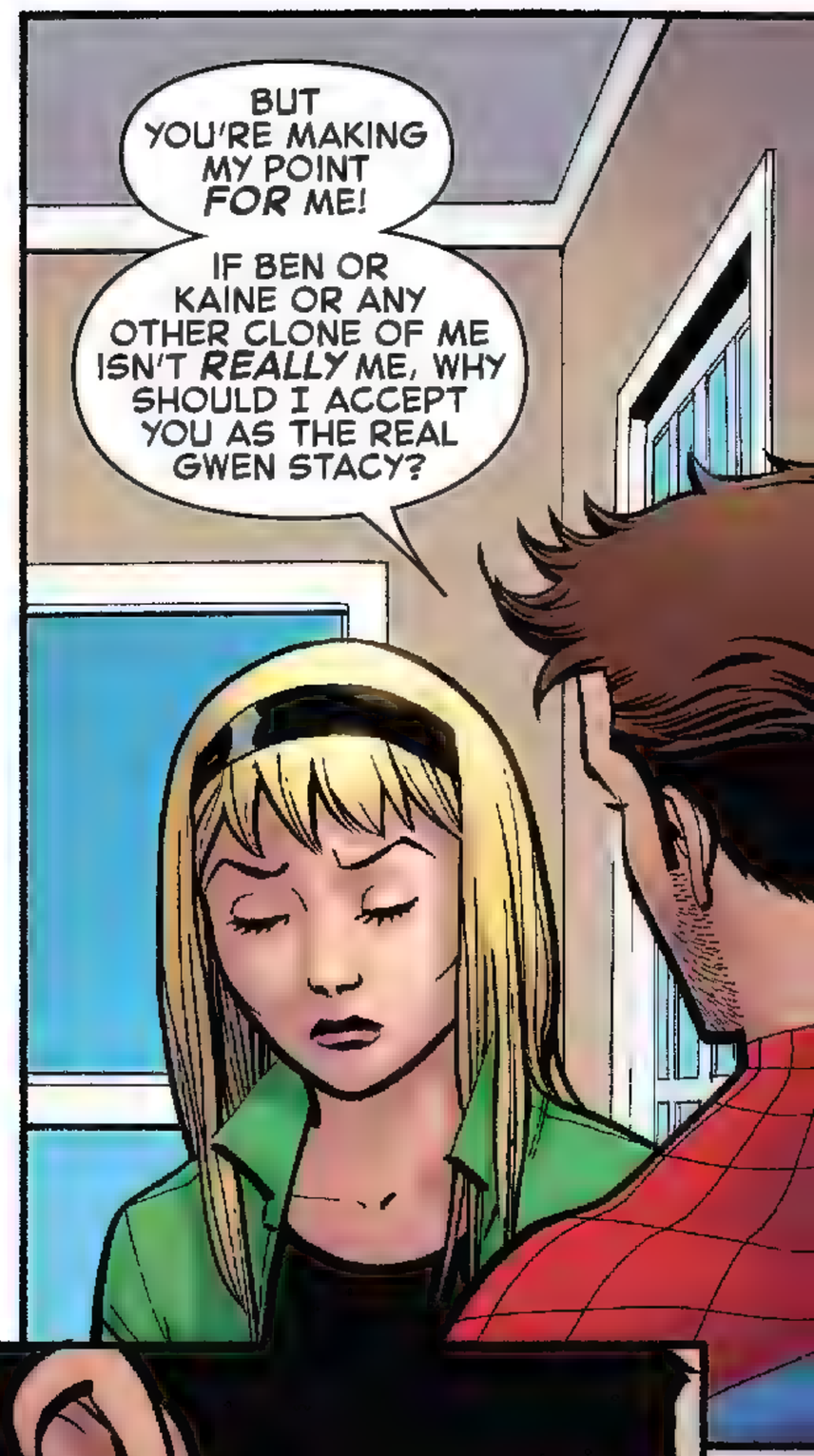

LOOK, YOU MET *KAINE*. MY CLONE. DO YOU FEEL ABOUT HIM THE WAY YOU DO ABOUT ME?
NO. HE'S A JERK. HE KNOCKED ME OUT AND WEBBED ME UP.
YEAH. SOUNDS LIKE HIM. BUT BY YOUR STANDARD, HE'S ME. SAME DNA, SAME MEMORIES.

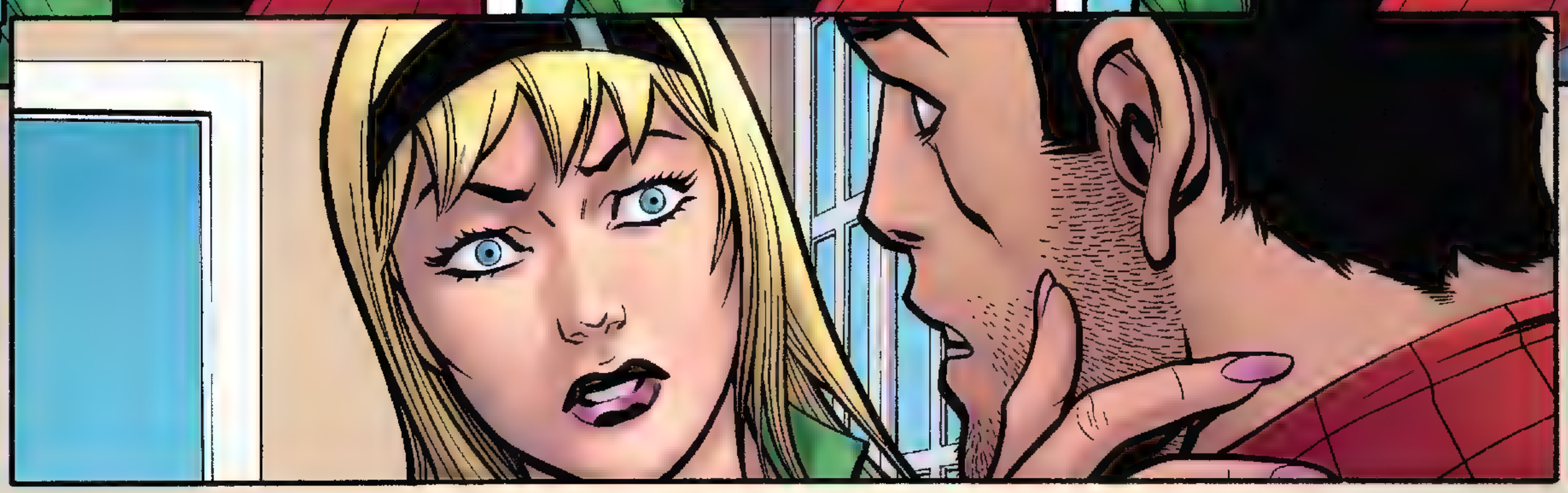

UP TO A POINT. HE TOLD ME HIS STORY, AFTER I SAW HIS FACE. HE HAD *YEARS* OF A DIFFERENT LIFE THAN YOU. HE'S A DIFFERENT PERSON. JUST LIKE--

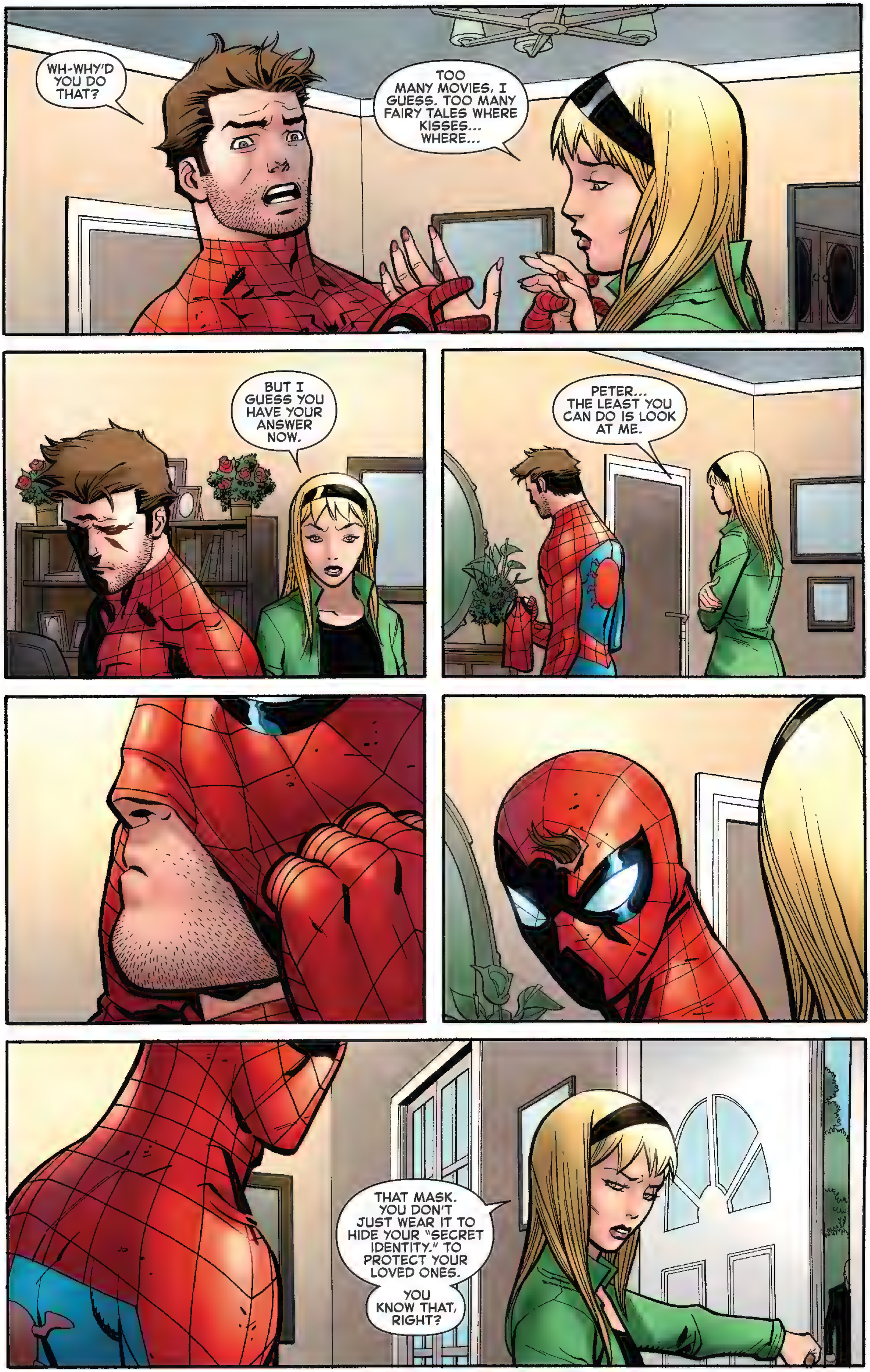

LIKE WHO?
YOU *KNOW*, DON'T YOU? WHO THE JACKAL REALLY IS.

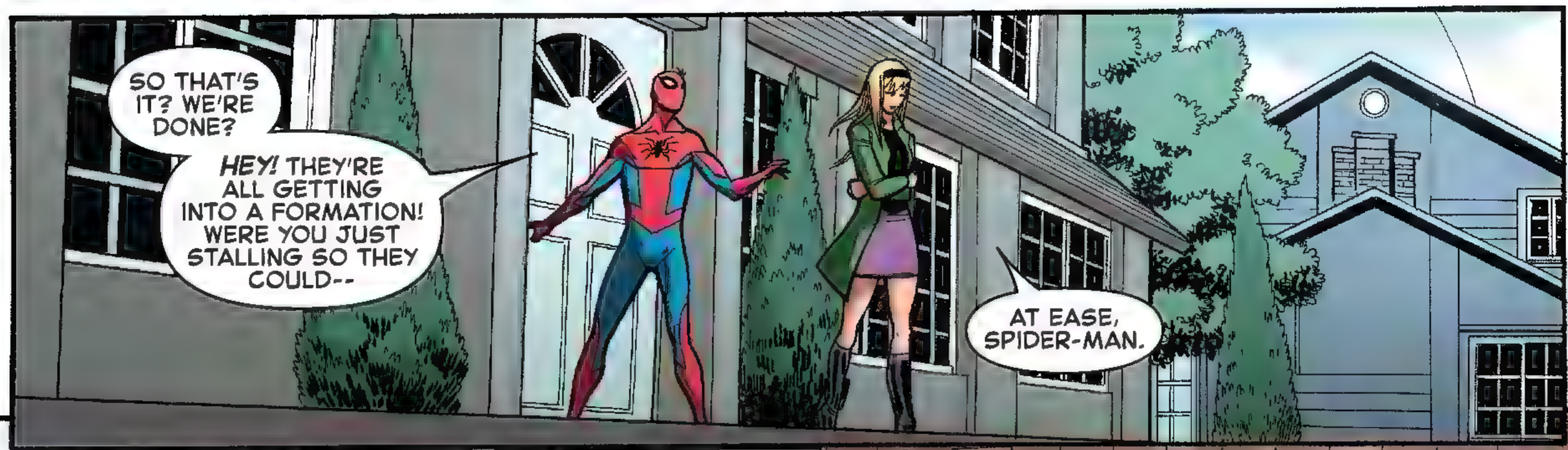

VOICE MODULATOR OR NO, I'M NOT AN IDIOT. I CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MILES WARREN AND SOMEONE CUT FROM THE SAME CLOTH AS THE GUY I LOVED.
BUT *NOT* HIM. THERE AGAIN-- SEPARATE LIFE, SEPARATE EXPERIENCES. "BEN REILLY" IS A DIFFERENT PERSON FROM PETER PARKER.


BUT THERE'S ENOUGH OF YOU IN HIM THAT I *KNOW* HE'S DOING WHAT HE THINKS IS RIGHT. FOR ALL THE RIGHT REASONS.
DAD AND I AGREE ON THAT. OR WE WOULDN'T BE PART OF THIS.


BUT YOU'RE MAKING MY POINT *FOR* ME!
IF BEN OR KAINE OR ANY OTHER CLONE OF ME ISN'T *REALLY* ME, WHY SHOULD I ACCEPT YOU AS THE REAL GWEN STACY?

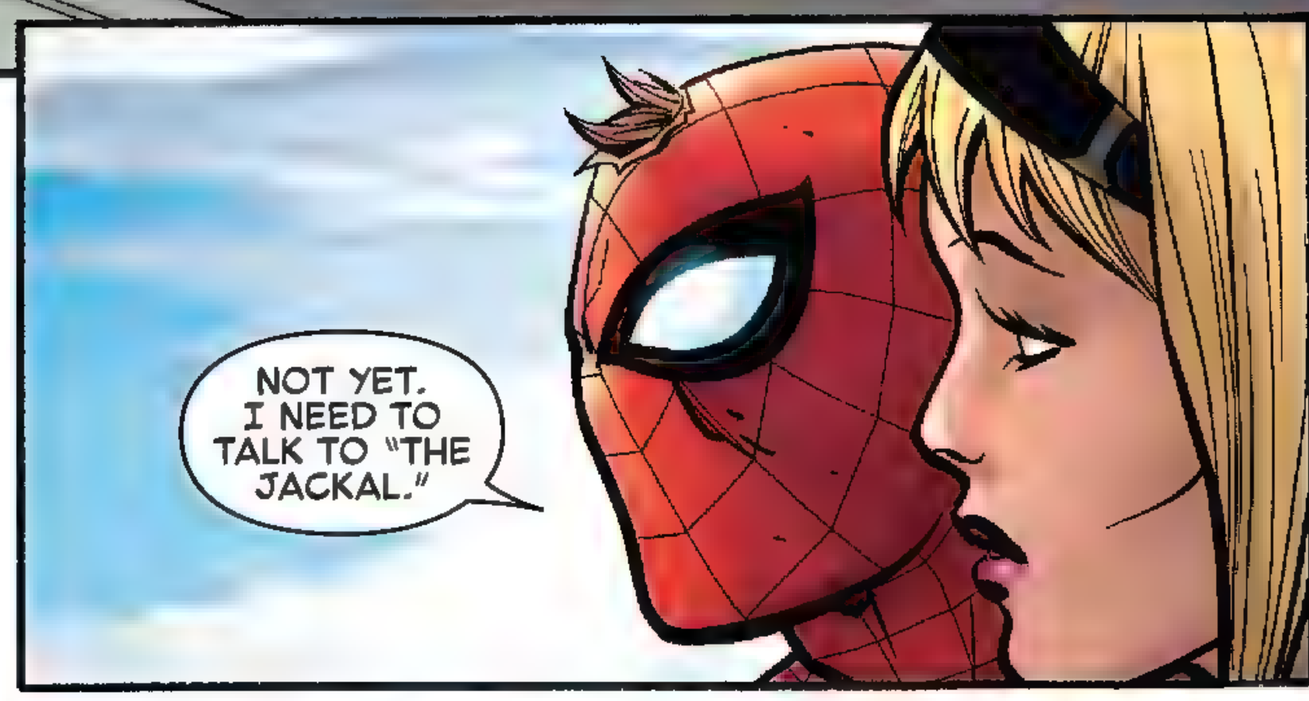


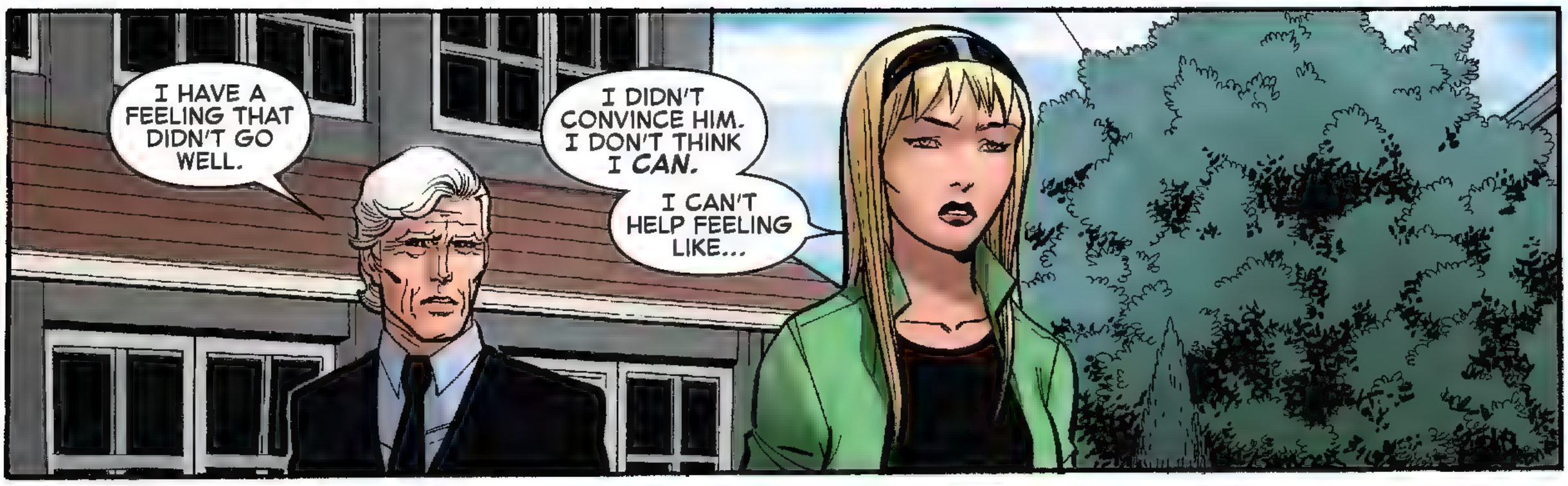

WH-WHY'D YOU DO THAT?
TOO MANY MOVIES, I GUESS. TOO MANY FAIRY TALES WHERE KISSES... WHERE...
BUT I GUESS YOU HAVE YOUR ANSWER NOW.
PETER... THE LEAST YOU CAN DO IS LOOK AT ME.
THAT MASK. YOU DON'T JUST WEAR IT TO HIDE YOUR "SECRET IDENTITY." TO PROTECT YOUR LOVED ONES.
YOU KNOW THAT, RIGHT?

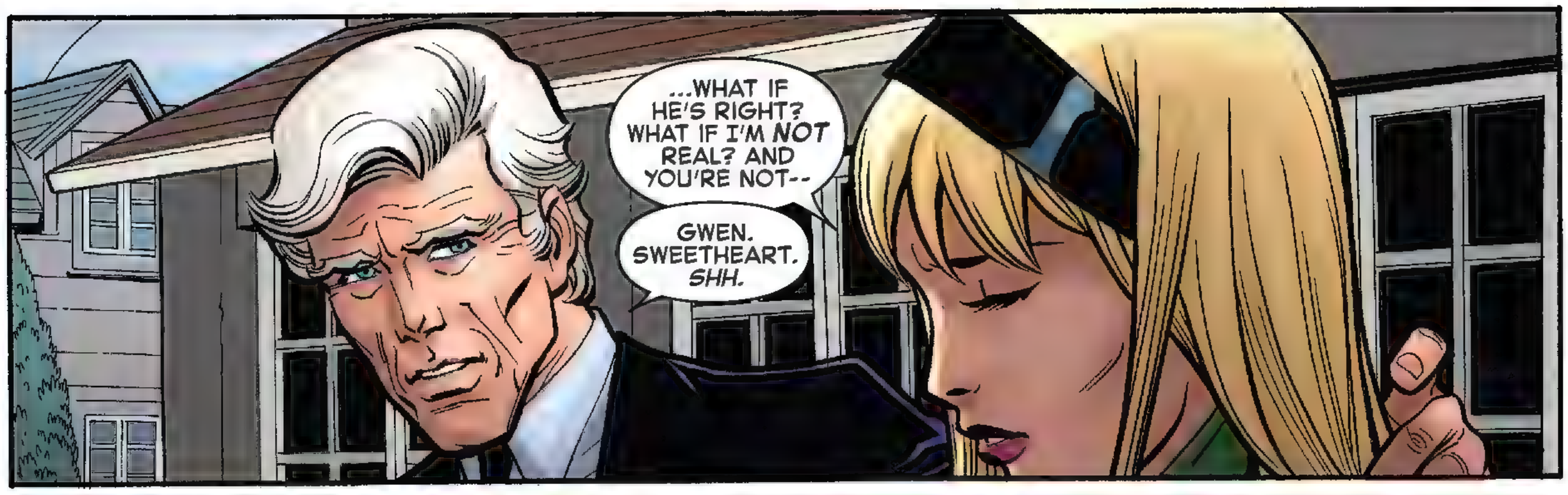


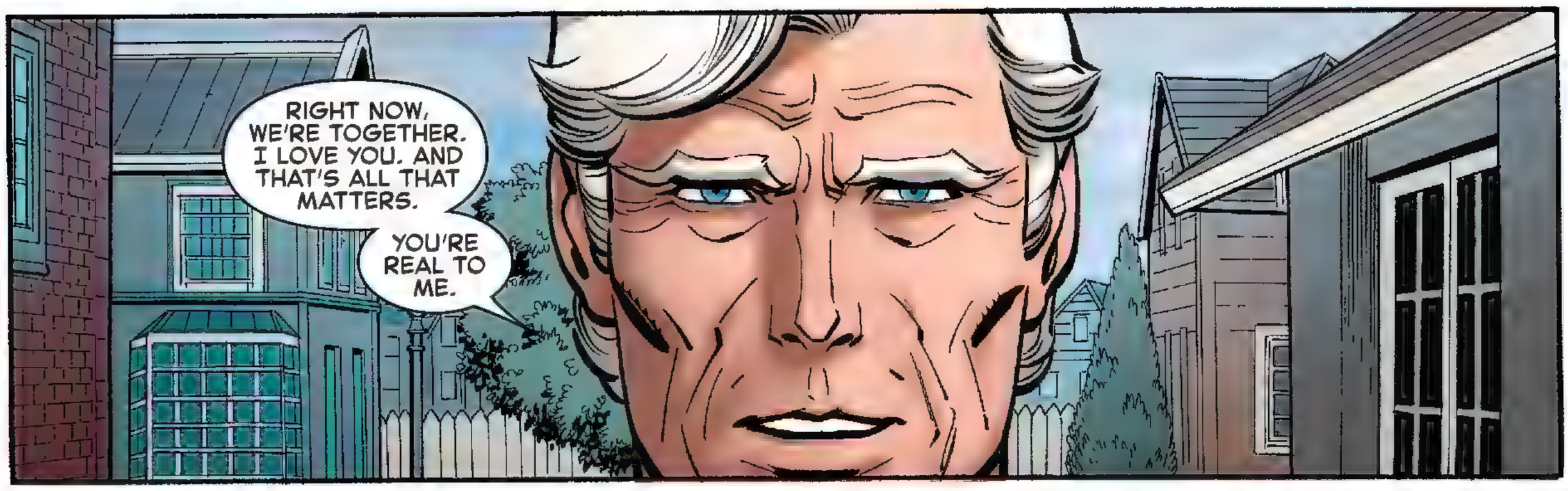
IT'S JUST MED TIME. EVERYONE'S GETTING THE PILL THAT KEEPS THEIR BODIES FROM BREAKING DOWN.

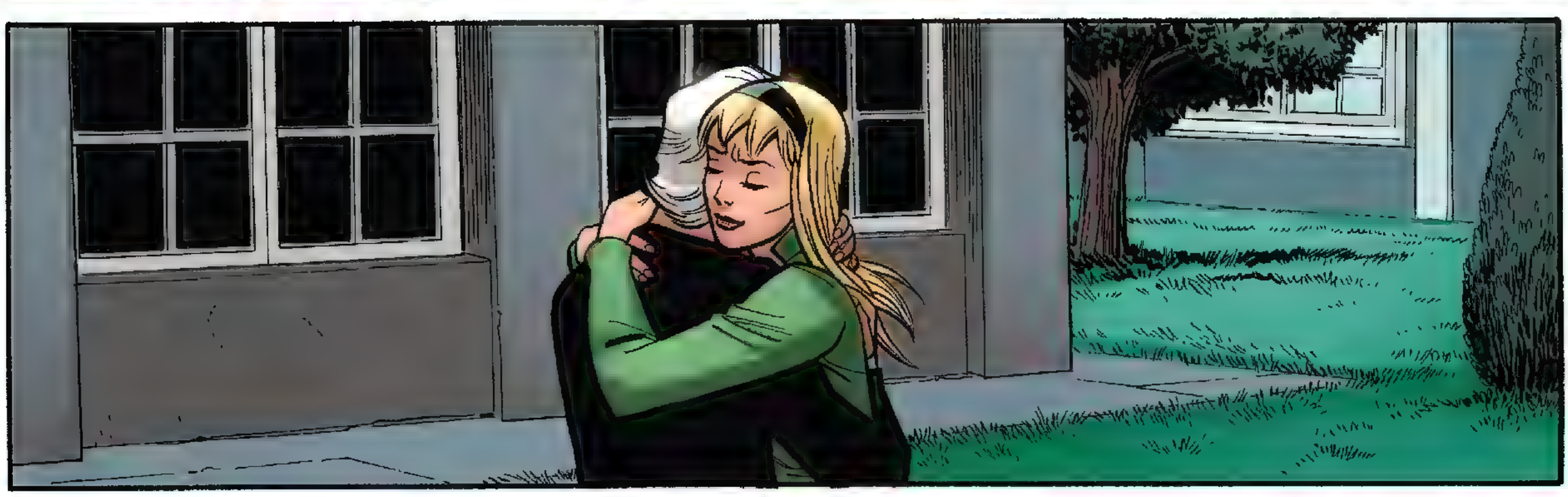
YOU STILL CAN'T ACCEPT IT, CAN YOU? THIS ISN'T SOME KIND OF TRAP OR EVIL SCHEME. IT'S A GIFT.

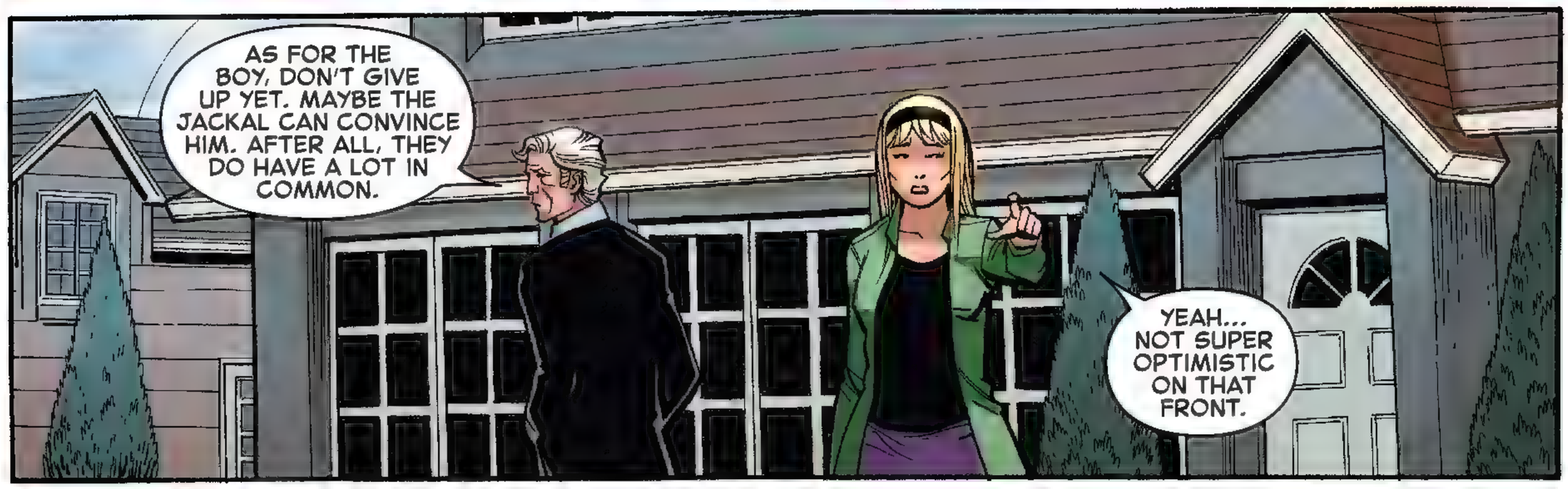



I HAVE A FEELING THAT DIDN'T GO WELL.
I DIDN'T CONVINCE HIM. I DON'T THINK I CAN.
I CAN'T HELP FEELING LIKE...

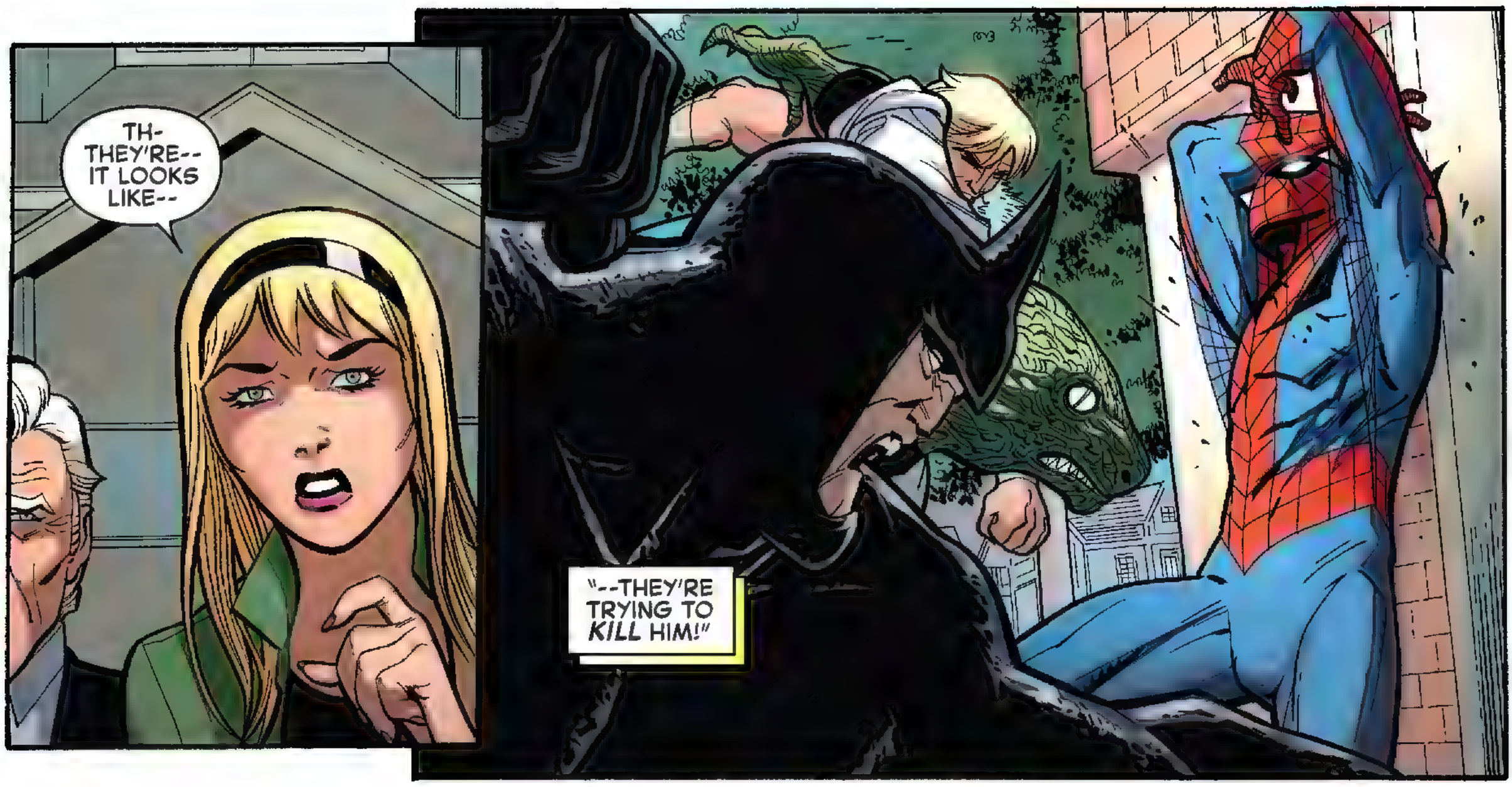

...WHAT IF HE'S RIGHT? WHAT IF I'M NOT REAL? AND YOU'RE NOT--
GWEN. SWEETHEART. SHH.

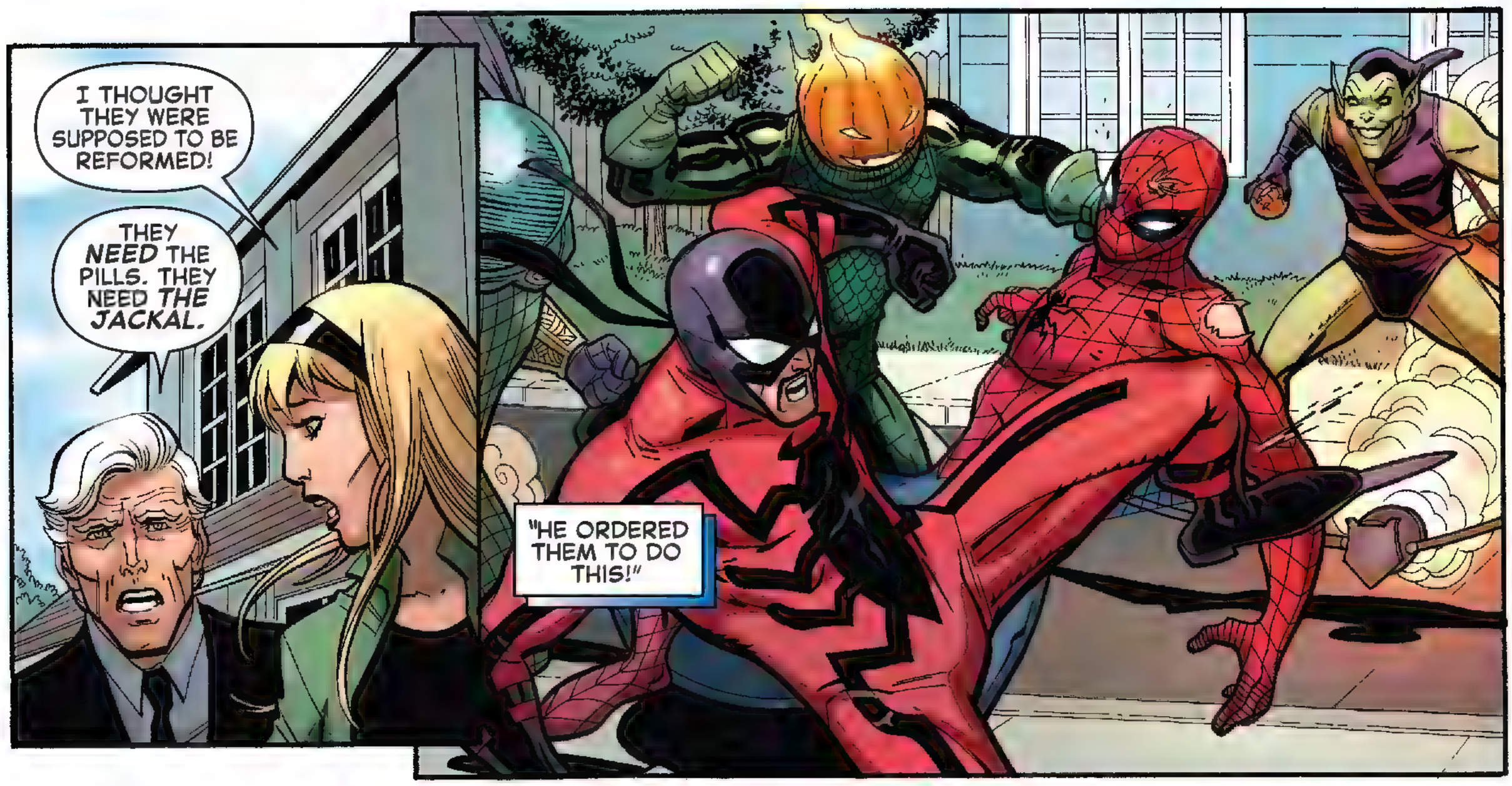

RIGHT NOW, WE'RE TOGETHER. I LOVE YOU. AND THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.
YOU'RE REAL TO ME.




AS FOR THE BOY, DON'T GIVE UP YET. MAYBE THE JACKAL CAN CONVINCE HIM. AFTER ALL, THEY DO HAVE A LOT IN COMMON.
YEAH... NOT SUPER OPTIMISTIC ON THAT FRONT.

LOOKS TO ME LIKE THEY'RE NOT EXACTLY REMINISCING ABOUT SCIENCE CLUB.
OH, NO...
I'VE GOT TO--
NO. STAY WITH ME!


TH- THEY'RE-- IT LOOKS LIKE--
"--THEY'RE TRYING TO KILL HIM!"


I THOUGHT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO BE REFORMED!
THEY NEED THE PILLS. THEY NEED THE JACKAL.
"HE ORDERED THEM TO DO THIS!"

SKREEEEEEE
I CAN'T JUST STAND HERE AND WATCH!
NO! YOU'RE NOT GETTING IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT!
I'M NOT LOSING YOU AGAIN!

SKREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
WHAT'S--?
AN ALARM, I'D IMAGINE. AND WE *SHOULD* GO INSIDE, BEFORE THIS MESS GETS OUT OF--
AAGGHH!
DAD! LET ME--
NNAHH!
OH, GOD...

P-PETER...
SPIDER-MAN!
HELP!
GWEN?
GWEN!
CONTINUED IN THE CLONE CONSPIRACY #5!

NEXT:

ZONE